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AN APOLOGY FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, AND FOR GENERAL LIBERTY.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

REMARKS ON

BISHOP HORSLEY's SERMON,

Preached on the Thirtieth of January last.

By R[illegible]ELL, A. M.

Shall Truth be silent, because Folly frowns? YOUNG.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW; W. H. LUNN, CAMBRIDGE; AND J. JAMES, BRISTOL.

M.DCC.XCIII.

(PRICE TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE.)

BRITISH MUSEUM

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THE PREFACE.

THE accidental detention of the following pamphlet in the preſs longer than was expected, gave me an opportunity before it was publiſhed, of ſeeing Biſhop HORSLEY's Sermon, preached before the Houſe of Lords, on the 30th of January; and as its contents are relevant to my ſubject, a few remarks upon it may not be ill-timed or improper.—His Lordſhip ſets out with a ſevere cenſure of that "*freedom of diſpute*," on matters of "*ſuch high importance as the origin of government, and the authority of ſovereigns*," in which he laments, it has been the "*folly of this country for ſeveral years paſt*," to indulge. If his Lordſhip has not inquired into thoſe

ſubjects himſelf, he can with little propriety pretend, to decide in ſo imperious and peremptory a manner; unleſs it be a privilege of his office to dogmatiſe without examination, or he has diſcovered ſome nearer road to truth than that of reaſoning and argument. —It ſeems a favourite point with a certain deſcription of men, to ſtop the progreſs of enquiry, and throw mankind back into the darkneſs of the middle ages, from a perſuaſion, that ignorance will augment their power, as objects look largeſt in a miſt. There is in reality no other foundation for that alarm, which the Biſhop expreſſes. Whatever is not comprehended under revelation, falls under the inſpection of reaſon; and ſince from the whole courſe of providence, it is evident, all political events, and all the revolutions of government, are affected by the inſtrumentality of men, there is no room for ſuppoſing them too ſacred to be ſubmitted to the human faculties. The more minds there are employed in tracing their principles and effects, the

the greater probability will there be of the ſcience of civil policy, as well as every other attaining to perfection.

Biſhop Horſley, determined to preſerve the character of an original, preſents us with a new ſet of political principles, and endeavours to place the exploded doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtence upon a new foundation. By a curious diſtinction between the *ground* of authority and obedience, he reſts the former on human compact, the latter on divide obligation. "*It is eaſy to underſtand,*" he ſays, "*that the principle of the private citizen's ſubmiſſion, muſt be quite a diſtinct thing from the principle of the ſovereign's public title. And for this plain reaſon: The principle of ſubmiſſion to bind the conſcience of every individual, muſt be ſomething univerſally known.*" He then proceeds to inform us, that the kingly title in England is founded on the act of ſettlement; but that as thouſands and tens of thouſands of the people have never heard of that act, the principle

which compels their allegiance, muſt be ſomething diſtinct from it, with which they may all be acquainted. In this reaſoning, he evidently confounds the obligation of an *individual* to ſubmit to the exiſting authority, with that of the community collectively conſidered. For *any particular number* of perſons to ſet themſelves by force to oppoſe the eſtabliſhed practice of a ſtate, is a plain violation of the laws of morality, as it would be productive of the utmoſt diſorder; and no government could ſtand, were it permitted to individuals, to counteract the general will, of which in ordinary caſes, legal uſages are the interpreter. In the worſt ſtate of political ſociety, if a people have not ſufficient wiſdom or courage to correct its evils and aſſert their liberty, the attempt of individuals to *force* improvements upon them, is a preſumption which merits the ſevereſt puniſhment.—Social order would be inevitably diſſolved, if any man declined a practical acquieſcence in every political regulation which he did not

not perſonally approve. The duty of ſubmiſſion is, in this light, founded on principles which hold under every government, and are plain and obvious. But the principle which attaches a people to their allegiance, collectively conſidered, muſt exactly coincide with the title to authority, as muſt be evident from the very meaning of the term authority, which, as diſtinguiſhed from force, ſignifies a right to demand obedience. Authority and obedience are correlative terms, and conſequently in all reſpects correſpond, and are commenſurate with each other.

"*The divine right*," his Lordſhip ſays, "*of the firſt magiſtrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience, is not of that ſort which it were high treaſon to claim for the ſovereign of this country. It is a right which in no country can be denied, without the higheſt of all treaſons. The denial of it were treaſon againſt the paramount authority of God.*" To inveſt any human power with theſe high epithets, is ridiculous at leaſt, if not impious. The right

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of a prince to the obdience of his ſubjects, where ever it exiſts, may be called divine, becauſe we know the divine Being is the patron of juſtice and order; but in that ſenſe, the authority of a petty conſtable is equally divine; nor can the term be applied with any greater propriety to ſupreme than to ſubordinate magiſtrates. As to "*ſubmiſſion being among the general rules which proceed from the will of God, and have been impreſſed upon the conſcience of every man by the original conſtitution of the world,*" nothing more is comprehended under this pomp of words, than that ſubmiſſion is, for the moſt part, a duty—a ſublime and intereſting diſcovery! The minds of princes are ſeldom of the firmeſt texture; and they who fill their heads with the magnificent chimera of divine right, prepare a victim, where they intend a God. Some ſpecies of government is eſſential to the well-being of mankind; ſubmiſſion to ſome ſpecies of governnment is conſequently a duty; but what kind of government ſhall be ap-

pointed, and to what limits ſubmiſſion ſhall extend, are mere human queſtions, to be adjuſted by mere human reaſon and contrivance.

As the natural conſequence of divine right, his Lordſhip proceeds to inculcate the doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtence, in the moſt unqualified terms, aſſuming it as a principle to be acted upon, under governments the moſt oppreſſive, in which he endeavours to ſhelter himſelf under the authority of Paul. The apoſtolic exhortation, as addreſſed to a few individuals, and adapted to the local circumſtances of chriſtians at that period, admits an eaſy ſolution; but to imagine it preſcribes the duty of the Roman empire, and is intended to ſubject millions to the capricious tyranny of one man, is a reflection as well on the character of Paul, as on Chriſtianity itſelf.

On principles of reaſon, the only way to determine the agreement of any thing with the will of God, is to conſider its influence on the happineſs of ſociety; ſo that in this

view,

view, the queſtion of paſſive obedience is reduced to a ſimple iſſue: Is it beſt for the human race that every tyrant and uſurper be ſubmitted to without check or controul? It ought likewiſe to be remembered that if the doctrine of paſſive obedience be true, princes ſhould be taught it, and inſtructed that to whatever exceſſes of cruelty and caprice they proceed, they may expect no reſiſtence on the part of the people. If this maxim appear to be conducive to general good, we may fairly preſume it concurs with the will of the Deity; but if it appear pregnant with that moſt miſchievous conſequences, it muſt diſclaim ſuch ſupport. From the known perfections of God, we conclude he wills the happineſs of mankind; and though he condeſcends not to interpoſe miraculouſly, that that kind of civil polity is moſt pleaſing in his eye, which is productive of the greateſt felicity.

On a compariſon of free with arbitrary governments, we perceive the former are diſtin-

diſtinguiſhed from the latter, by imparting a much greater ſhare of happineſs to thoſe who live under them; and this in a manner too uniform to be imputed to chance or *ſecret* cauſes. He who wills the end, muſt will the means which aſcertain it. His Lordſhip endeavours to diminiſh the dread of diſpotic government, by obſerving, that in its worſt ſtate it is attended with more good than ill, and that the "*end of government under all its abuſes is generally anſwered by it.*" Admitting this to be true, it is at beſt but a conſolation proper to be applied where there is no remedy, and affords no reaſon why we ſhould not mitigate political as well as other evils, when it lies in our power. We endeavour to correct the diſeaſes of the eye, or of any other organ, though the malady be not ſuch as renders it uſeleſs.

The doctrine of paſſive obedience is ſo repugnant to the genuine feelings of human nature, that it can never be completely acted on: a ſecret dread that popular vengeance

will awake, and nature aſſert her rights, impoſes a reſtraint, which the moſt determined deſpotiſm is not able to ſhake off. The rude reaſon of the multitude may be perplexed, but the ſentiments of the heart are not eaſily perverted.

In adjuſting the different parts of his theory, the learned Biſhop appears a good deal embarraſſed. "*It will be readily admitted,*" he ſays, (p. 9.) "*that of all ſovereigns, none reign by ſo fair and juſt a title, as thoſe who derive their claim from ſome ſuch public act (as the act of ſettlement) of the nation which they govern.*" That there are different degrees in *juſtice*, and even in *divine right*, (which his Lordſhip declares all ſovereigns poſſeſs) is a very ſingular idea. Common minds would be ready to imagine, however various the modes of *injuſtice* may be, *juſtice* were a thing abſolute and invariable, nor would they conceive, how "*a divine right, a right the denial of which is high treaſon againſt the authority of God,*" can be increaſed by the act

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of a nation. But this is not all. It is no juſt inference (he tells us) that the obligation upon the private citizen to ſubmit himſelf to the authority thus raiſed, ariſes wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the perſon on whom it is conferred. But if the ſovereign derives his claim from this act of the nation, how comes it that the obligation of the people to ſubmit to his claim, does not ſpring from the ſame act? Becauſe "*in all theſe cauſes, he affirms, the act of the people is only the means which Providence employs to advance the new ſovereign to his ſtation.*" In the hand of the Supreme Being, the whole agency of men may be conſidered as an *inſtrument*; but to make it appear that the right of dominion, is independent of the people; men muſt be ſhewn to be inſtruments in political affairs, in a more abſolute ſenſe than ordinary. A divine interpoſition of a more immediate kind, muſt be ſhewn, or the mere conſideration of God's being the original ſource of all power, will be a

weak reaſon for abſolute ſubmiſſion. Anarchy may have *power* as well as deſpotiſm, and is equally a link in the great chain of cauſes and effects.

It is not a little extraordinary, that Biſhop Horſley, the apologiſt of tyranny, the patron of paſſive obedience, ſhould affect to admire the Britiſh conſtitution, whoſe freedom was attained by a palpable violation of the principles for which he contends. He will not ſay the Barons at Runnamede, acted on his maxims, in extorting the magna charta from King John, or in demanding its confirmation from Henry the Third. If he approve of their conduct, he gives up his cauſe, and is compelled at leaſt to confeſs the principles of paſſive obedience were not true at that time; if he diſapprove of their conduct, he muſt, to be conſiſtent, reprobate the reſtraints which it impoſed on kingly power. The limitations of monarchy, which his Lordſhip pretends to applaud, were affected by reſiſtence; the freedom of the Britiſh conſti-

tution flowed from a departure from paſſive obedience, and was therefore ſtained with high treaſon "*againſt the authority of God.*" To theſe concluſions he muſt inevitably come, unleſs he can point out ſomething peculiar to the ſpot of Runnamede, or to the reign of King John, which confines the exception to the general doctrine of ſubmiſſion, to that particular time and place. With whatever colours the advocates of paſſive obedience may varniſh their theories, they muſt of neceſſity be enemies to the Britiſh conſtitution. Its ſpirit they deteſt; its corruptions they cheriſh; and if at preſent they affect a zeal for its preſervation, it is only becauſe they deſpair of any form of government being ever erected in its ſtead, which will give equal permanence to abuſes. Afraid to deſtroy it at once, they taſte a malignant pleaſure in ſeeing it waſte by degrees under the preſſure of internal malady.

Whatever bears the ſemblance of *reaſoning*, in Biſhop Horſley's diſcourſe, will be found

I truſt,

I truſt, to have received a ſatisfactory anſwer; but to animadvert with a becoming ſeverity on the temper it diſplays, is a leſs eaſy taſk. To render him the juſtice he deſerves in that reſpect, would demand all the fierceneſs of his character.

We owe him an acknowledgement for the frankneſs with which he avows his decided preference of the clergy of France to diſſenters in England;—a ſentiment we have often ſuſpected, but have ſeldom had the ſatisfaction of ſeeing openly profeſſed before.

"*None,*" he aſſerts, "*at this ſeaſon, are*
"*more entitled to our offices of love, than thoſe*
"*with whom the difference is wide in points*
"*of doctrine, diſcipline, and external rites; thoſe*
"*venerable exiles the prelates and clergy of*
"*the fallen church of France.*" Far be it from me to intercept the compaſſion of the humane from the unhappy of any nation, tongue, or people; but the extreme tenderneſs he profeſſes for the fallen church of France, is well contraſted by his malignity towards

towards diſſenters. Biſhop Horſley is a man of ſenſe; and though doctrine, diſcipline, and external rites, comprehend the whole of Chriſtianity, his tender, ſympathetic heart is ſuperior to prejudice, and never fails to recognize in a perſecutor, a friend and a brother.—Admirable conſiſtence in a Proteſtant Biſhop, to lament over the fall of that antichriſt whoſe overthrow is repreſented by unerring inſpiration, as an event the moſt ſplendid and happy! It is a ſhrewd preſumption againſt the utility of religious eſtabliſhments that they too often become ſeats of intolerance, inſtigators to perſecution, nurſeries of Bonners and of Horſleys.

His Lordſhip cloſes his invective againſt diſſenters, and Dr. Prieſtley in particular, by preſenting a prayer in the ſpirit of an indictment. We are happy to hear of his Lordſhip's prayers, and are obliged to him for remembering us in them; but ſhould be more ſanguine in our expectation of benefit, if we were not informed, the prayers of the *righteous* only

only avail much. "*Miſerable men,*" he tells us, we "*are in the gall of bitterneſs, and in the bond of iniquity.*" With reſpect to the firſt, we muſt have plenty of that article, ſince he has diſtilled his own; and if the bonds of iniquity are not added, it is only becauſe they are not within the reach of his mighty malice.

When we reflect on the qualities which diſtinguiſh this prelate, that venom that hiſſes, and that meanneſs that creeps, the malice that attends him to the ſanctuary, and pollutes the altar, we feel a ſimilar perplexity with that which ſprings from the origin of evil. But if we recollect on the other hand, that inſtruction may be conveyed by negatives, and that the union in one character of nearly all the diſpoſitions human nature, *ought not to poſſeſs*, may be a uſeful warning, at leaſt, we ſhall ceaſe to wonder at the exiſtence and elevation of Dr. Horſley. Characters of his ſtamp, like a plague or a tempeſt, may have their uſes in the general ſyſtem, if they recur not too often.

It is time to turn from this diſguſting picture of ſanctimonious hypocriſy and prieſtly inſolence, to addreſs a word to the reader on the following pamphlet. The political ſentiments of Dr. Horſley are in truth of too little conſequence in themſelves, to engage a moment's curioſity, and deſerve attention only as they indicate the ſpirit of the times. The freedom with which I have pointed out the abuſes of government, will be little reliſhed by the puſillanimous and the intereſted, but is, I am certain, of that nature, which it is the duty of the people of England never to relinquiſh, or ſuffer to be impaired by any human force or contrivance. In the preſent criſis of things, the danger to liberty is extreme, and it is requiſite to addreſs a warning voice to the nation, that may diſturb its ſlumbers, if it cannot heal its lethargy. When we look at the diſtraction and miſery of a neighbouring country, we behold a ſcene that is enough to make the moſt hardy republican tremble at the idea of a revolution. Nothing

but an obſtinate adherence to abuſes, can ever puſh the people of England to that fatal extremity. But if the ſtate of things continues to grow worſe and worſe, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and perſecution, the confuſion will probably be dreadful, the miſery extreme, and the calamities that await us too great for human calculation.

What muſt be the guilt of thoſe men, who can calmly contemplate the approach of anarchy or deſpotiſm, and rather chuſe to behold the ruin of their country, than reſign the ſmalleſt pittance of private emolument and advantage. To reconcile the diſaffected, to remove diſcontents, to allay animoſities, and open a proſpect of increaſing happineſs and freedom, is yet in our power. But if a contrary courſe be taken, the ſun of Great Britain is ſet for ever, her glory departed, and her hiſtory added to the catalogue of the mighty empires which exhibit the inſtability

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of all human grandeur, of empires which after they roſe by virtue to be the admiration of the world ſunk by corruption into obſcurity and contempt. If any thing ſhall then remain of her boaſted conſtitution, it will diſplay magnificence in diſorder, majeſtic deſolation, Babylon in ruins, where, in the midſt of broken arches and fallen columns, poſterity will trace the *monuments* only of our ancient freedom!

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AN

APOLOGY, &c.

SECTION I.

On the Right of Public Diſcuſſion.

SOLON, the celebrated legiſlator of Athens, we are told, enacted a law for the capital puniſhment of every citizen who ſhould continue neuter when parties ran high in that republic. He conſidered, it ſhould ſeem, the declining to take a decided part on great and critical occaſions, an indication of ſuch a culpable indifference to the intereſts of the commonwealth, as could be expiated only by death. While we blame the rigour of this law, we muſt confeſs the principle, on which it was founded, is juſt and ſolid. In a political conteſt, relating

relating to particular men or meaſures, a well-wiſher to his country may be permitted to remain ſilent; but when the great intereſts of a nation are at ſtake, it becomes every man to act with firmneſs and vigour. I conſider the preſent as a ſeaſon of this nature, and ſhall therefore make no apology for laying before the public, the reflections it has ſuggeſted.

The moſt capital advantage an enlightened people can enjoy is the liberty of diſcuſſing every ſubject which can fall within the compaſs of the human mind; while this remains, freedom will flouriſh; but ſhould it be loſt or impaired, its principles will neither be well underſtood or long retained. To render the magiſtrate a judge of truth, and engage his authority in the ſuppreſſion of opinions, ſhews an inattention to the nature and deſign of political ſociety. When a nation forms a government, it is not wiſdom but *power* which they place in the hands of the magiſtrate; from whence it follows, his concern is only with thoſe objects which *power* can operate upon. On this account the adminiſtration of juſtice, the protection of property, and the defence of every member of the

the community from violence and outrage, fall naturally within the province of the civil ruler, for theſe may all be accompliſhed by *power*; but an attempt to diſtinguiſh truth from error, and to countenance one ſet of opinions to the prejudice of another, is to apply power in a manner miſchievous and abſurd. To comprehend the reaſons on which the right of public diſcuſſion is founded, it is requiſite to remark the difference between *ſentiment* and *conduct*. The *behaviour* of men in ſociety will be influenced by motives drawn from the proſpect of good and evil: here then is the proper department of government, as it is capable of applying that good and evil by which actions are determined. Truth, on the contrary, is quite of a different nature, being ſupported only by *evidence*, and, as when this is preſented, we cannot withhold our aſſent, ſo where this is wanting, no power or authority can command it.

However ſome may affect to dread controverſy, it can never be of ultimate diſadvantage to the intereſts of truth, or the happineſs of mankind. Where it is indulged in its full extent, a multitude of ridiculous opinions will, no doubt,

be obtruded upon the public; but any ill influence they may produce cannot continue long, as they are ſure to be oppoſed with at leaſt equal ability, and that ſuperior advantage which is ever attendant on truth. The colours with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a falſe ſyſtem will gradually die away, ſophiſtry be detected, and every thing eſtimated at length according to its true value. Publications beſides, like every thing elſe that is human, are of a mixed nature, where truth is often blended with falſehood, and important hints ſuggeſted in the midſt of much impertinent or pernicious matter; nor is there any way of ſeparating the precious from the vile but tolerating the whole. Where the right of unlimited enquiry is exerted, the human faculties will be upon the advance; where it is relinquiſhed, they will be of neceſſity at a ſtand, and will probably decline.

If we have recourſe to experience, that kind of enlarged experience in particular which hiſtory furniſhes, we ſhall not be apt to entertain any violent alarm at the greateſt liberty of diſcuſſion: we ſhall there ſee that to this we are indebted for thoſe improvements in arts and ſciences;

ſciences, which have meliorated in ſo great a degree the condition of mankind. The middle ages, as they are called, the darkeſt period of which we have any particular accounts, were remarkable for two things; the extreme ignorance that prevailed, and an exceſſive veneration for received opinions; circumſtances, which, having been always united, operate on each other, it is plain as cauſe and effect. The whole compaſs of ſcience was in thoſe times ſubject to reſtraint; every new opinion was looked upon as dangerous. To affirm the globe we inhabit to be round, was deemed hereſy, and for aſſerting its motion, the immortal Galileo was confined in the priſons of the inquiſition. Yet, it is remarkable, ſo little are the human faculties fitted for reſtraint, that its utmoſt rigour was never able to effect a thorough unanimity, or to preclude the moſt alarming diſcuſſions and controverſies. For no ſooner was one point ſettled than another was ſtarted, and as the articles on which men profeſſed to differ were always extremely few and ſubtle, they came the more eaſily into contact, and their animoſities were the more violent and concentrated. The

ſhape of the tonſure, or manner in which a monk ſhould ſhave his head, would then throw a whole kingdom into convulſions. In proportion as the world has become more enlightened, this unnatural policy of reſtraint has retired; the ſciences it has entirely abandoned, and has taken its laſt ſtand on religion and politics. The firſt of theſe was long conſidered of a nature ſo peculiarly ſacred, that every attempt to alter it, or to impair the reverence for its received inſtitutions, was regarded under the name of hereſy as a crime of the firſt magnitude. Yet, dangerous as free enquiry may have been looked upon, when extended to the principles of religion, there is no department where it was more neceſſary, or its interference more decidedly beneficial. By nobly daring to exert it when all the powers on earth were combined in its ſuppreſſion, did Luther accompliſh that reformation which drew forth primitive chriſtianity, long hidden and concealed under a load of abuſes, to the view of an awakened and aſtoniſhed world. So great is the force of truth when it has once gained the attention, that all the arts and policy of the court of Rome, aided throughout every

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part of Europe, by a veneration for antiquity, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the cruelty of deſpots, were fairly baffled and confounded by the oppoſition of a ſolitary monk. And had this principle of free enquiry been permitted in ſucceeding times to have full ſcope, chriſtianity would at this period have been much better underſtood, and the animoſity of ſects conſiderably abated. Religious toleration has never been complete even in England; but having prevailed more here than perhaps in any other country, there is no place where the doctrines of religion have been ſet in ſo clear a light, or its truth ſo ably defended. The writings of deiſts have contributed much to this end. Whoever will compare the late defences of chriſtianity by Locke, Butler, or Clark, with thoſe of the ancient apologiſts, will diſcern in the former far more preciſion and an abler method of reaſoning than in the latter, which muſt be attributed chiefly to the ſuperior ſpirit of enquiry by which modern times are diſtinguiſhed. Whatever alarm then may have been taken at the liberty of diſcuſſion, religion it is plain hath been a gainer by it; its abuſes corrected, and its

divine authority ſettled on a firmer baſis than ever.

Though I have taken the liberty of making theſe preliminary remarks on the influence of free enquiry in general, what I have more immediately in view is, to defend its exerciſe in relation to government. This being an inſtitution purely human, one would imagine it were the proper province for freedom of diſcuſſion in its utmoſt extent. It is ſurely juſt that every one ſhould have a right to examine thoſe meaſures by which the happineſs of all may be affected. The controul of the public mind over the conduct of miniſters exerted through the medium of the preſs, has been regarded by the beſt writers both in our country and on the continent, as the main ſupport of our liberties. While this remains we cannot be enſlaved; when it is impaired or diminiſhed, we ſhall ſoon ceaſe to be free.

Under pretence of its being ſeditious to expreſs any diſapprobation of the *form* of our government, the moſt alarming attempts are made to wreſt the liberty of the preſs out of our hands. It is far from being my intention to ſet

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up a defence of republican principles, as I am perſuaded whatever imperfections may attend the Britiſh conſtitution, it is competent to all the ends of government, and the beſt adapted of any to the *actual* ſituation of this kingdom. Yet I am convinced there is no crime in being a republican, and that while he obeys the laws, every man has a right to entertain what ſentiments he pleaſes on our form of government, and to diſcuſs this with the ſame freedom as any other topic. In proof of this, I ſhall beg the reader's attention to the following arguments.

1. We may apply to this point in particular, the obſervation that has been made on the influence of free enquiry in general, that it will iſſue in the firmer eſtabliſhment of truth, and the overthrow of error. Every thing that is really excellent will bear examination, it will even invite it, and the more narrowly it is ſurveyed, to the more advantage will it appear. Is our conſtitution a good one, it will gain in our eſteem by the ſevereſt enquiry. Is it bad, then its imperfections ſhould be laid open and expoſed. Is it, as is generally confeſſed, of a mixed nature, excellent in theory, but defective in

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its practice; freedom of diſcuſſion will be ſtill requiſite to point out the nature and ſource of its corruptions and apply ſuitable remedies. If our conſtitution be that perfect model of excellence it is repreſented, it may boldly appeal to the *reaſon* of an enlightened age, and need not reſt on the ſupport of an implicit faith.

2. Government is the creature of the people, and that which they have created they ſurely have a right to examine. The great Author of Nature having placed the right of dominion in no particular hands, hath left every point relating to it to be ſettled by the conſent and approbation of mankind. In ſpite of the attempts of ſophiſtry to conceal the origin of political right, it muſt inevitably reſt at length on the acquieſcence of the people. In the caſe of individuals it is extremely plain. If one man ſhould overwhelm another with ſuperior force, and after completely ſubduing him under the name of government, tranſmit him in this condition to his heirs, every one would exclaim againſt ſuch a piece of injuſtice. But whether the object of this oppreſſion be one, or a million, can make no difference in its nature, the idea of equity having

having no relation to that of numbers. Mr. Burke, with ſome other authors, are aware that an original right of dominion can only be explained by reſolving it into the will of the people, yet contend that it becomes inalienable and independent by length of time and preſcription. This fatal miſtake appears to me to have ariſen from confounding the right of dominion with that of private property. Poſſeſſion for a certain time, it is true, veſts in the latter a complete right, or there would be no end to vexatious claims; not to mention that it is of no conſequence to ſociety where property lies, provided its regulations be clear, and its poſſeſſion undiſturbed. For the ſame reaſon it is of the eſſence of private property, to be held for the ſole uſe of the owner, with liberty to employ it in what way he pleaſes, conſiſtent with the ſafety of the community. But the right of dominion has none of the qualities that diſtinguiſh private poſſeſſion. It is never indifferent to the community in whoſe hands it is lodged; nor is it intended in any degree for the benefit of thoſe who conduct it. Being derived from the will of the people, explicit or implied, and exiſting

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ſolely for their uſe, it can no more become independent of that will, than water can riſe above its ſource. But if we allow the people are the true origin of political power, it is abſurd to require them to reſign the right of diſcuſſing any queſtion that can ariſe either upon its form or its meaſures, as this would put it for ever out of their power to revoke the truſt which they have placed in the hands of their rulers.

3. If it be a crime for a ſubject of Great Britain to expreſs his diſapprobation of that form of government under which he lives, the ſame conduct muſt be condemned in the inhabitant of any other country. Perhaps it will be ſaid, a diſtinction ought to be made on account of the ſuperior excellence of the Britiſh conſtitution. This ſuperiority I am not diſpoſed to conteſt; yet cannot allow it to be a proper reply, as it takes for granted that which is ſuppoſed to be matter of debate and enquiry. Let a government be ever ſo deſpotic, it is a chance if thoſe who ſhare in the adminiſtration, are not loud in proclaiming its excellence. Go into Turkey, and the Pachas of the provinces will probably tell you, that the Turkiſh government is the

moſt perfect in the world. If the excellency of a conſtitution then is aſſigned as the reaſon that none ſhould be permitted to cenſure it, who, I aſk, is to determine on this its excellence? If you reply every man's own reaſon will determine; you concede the very point I am endeavouring to eſtabliſh, the liberty of free enquiry: if you reply, our rulers, you admit a principle that equally applies to every government in the world, and will lend no more ſupport to the Britiſh conſtitution than to that of Turkey or Algiers.

4. An enquiry reſpecting the comparative excellence of civil conſtitutions can be forbidden on no other pretence, than that of its tending to ſedition and anarchy. This plea, however, will have little weight with thoſe who reflect, to how many ill purpoſes it has been already applied; and that when the example has been once introduced of ſuppreſſing opinions on account of their imagined ill tendency, it has ſeldom been confined within any ſafe or reaſonable bounds. The doctrine of tendencies is extremely ſubtle and complicated. Whatever would diminiſh our veneration for the chriſtian religion, or ſhake

our belief in the being of a God, will be allowed to be of a very evil tendency; yet few, I imagine, who are acquainted with hiſtory, would wiſh to ſee the writings of ſceptiſts or deiſts ſuppreſſed by law; being perſuaded it would be lodging a very dangerous power in the hands of the magiſtrate, and the truth is beſt ſupported by its own evidence. This dread of certain opinions, on account of their tendency, has been the copious ſpring of all thoſe religious wars and perſecutions, which are the diſgrace and calamity of modern times.

Whatever danger may reſult from the freedom of political debate in ſome countries, no apprehenſion from that quarter need be entertained in our own. Free enquiry will never endanger the exiſtence of a good government; ſcarcely will it be able to work the overthrow of a bad one. So uncertain is the iſſue of all revolutions, ſo turbulent and bloody the ſcenes that too often uſher them in, the prejudice on the ſide of an ancient eſtabliſhment ſo great, and the intereſts involved in its ſupport ſo powerful, that while it provides any tolerable meaſure for the

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happineſs of the people, it may defy all the efforts of its enemies.

The real danger to every free government is leſs from its enemies than from itſelf. Should it reſiſt the moſt temperate reforms, and maintain its abuſes with obſtinacy, imputing complaint to faction, calumniating its friends, and ſmiling only on its flatterers, ſhould it encourage informers, and hold out rewards to treachery, turning every man into a ſpy, and every neighbourhood into the ſeat of an inquiſition, let it not hope it can long conceal its tyranny under the maſk of freedom. Theſe are the avenues through which deſpotiſm muſt enter; theſe are the arts at which integrity ſickens and freedom turns pale.

SECTION II.

On Aſſociations.

THE aſſociations that have been formed in various parts of the kingdom, appear to me to have trodden very nearly in the ſteps I have been deſcribing. Nothing could have juſtified this extraordinary mode of combination but the actual exiſtence of thoſe inſurrections and plots, of which no traces have appeared, except in a ſpeech from the throne. They merit a patent for inſurrections, who have diſcovered the art of conducting them with ſo much ſilence and ſecrecy, that in the very places where they are affirmed to have happened, they have been heard of only by rebound from the cabinet. Happy had it been for the repoſe of unoffending multitudes, if the Aſſociators had been able to put their mobs in poſſeſſion of this important diſcovery before they ſet them in motion.

No ſooner had the miniſtry ſpread an alarm through

through the kingdom againſt republicans and levellers, than an aſſembly of court-ſycophants with a placeman at their head, entered into what they termed, an aſſociation at the Crown and Anchor Tavern; whence they iſſued accounts of their proceedings. This was the primitive, the metropolitan aſſociation, which, with few exceptions, gave the tone to the ſucceeding, who did little more than copy its language and its ſpirit. As the popular ferment has it may be hoped by this time in ſome meaſure ſubſided, it may not be improper to endeavour to eſtimate the utility, and develope the principles of theſe ſocieties.

1. The firſt particular that engages the attention, is their *ſingular* and *unprecedented* nature. The object is altogether new. The political ſocieties that have been hitherto formed, never thought of interfering with the operations of law, but were content with giving by their union, greater force and publicity, to their ſentiments. The diffuſion of principles was their object, not the ſuppreſſion; and confiding in the juſtneſs of their cauſe, they challenged their enemies into the field of controverſy. Theſe

ſocieties on the other hand are combined with an expreſs view to extinguiſh opinions, and to overwhelm freedom of enquiry by the terrors of criminal proſecution. They pretend not to enlighten the people by the ſpread of political knowledge, or to confute the errors of the ſyſtem they wiſh to diſcountenance: they breathe only the language of menace: their element is indictment and proſecution, and their criminal juſtice formed on the model of Rhadamanthus the poetic judge of Hell.

Caſtigatque, auditque dolos ſubigitque fateri.

2. They are not only new in their nature and complexion, but are unſupported by any juſt pretence of expedience, or neceſſity. The Britiſh conſtitution hath provided ample ſecurities for its ſtability and permanence. The prerogatives of the crown in all matters touching its dignity are of a nature ſo high and weighty as may rather occaſion alarm than need corroboration. The office of Attorney General is created for the very purpoſe of proſecuting ſedition, and he has the peculiar privilege of filing

filing a bill againſt offenders, in the King's name, without the intervention of a grand Jury. If the public tranquillity be threatened, the King can embody the militia as well as ſtation the military in the ſuſpected places; and when to this is added the immenſe patronage and influence which flows from the diſpoſal of ſeventeen millions a year, it muſt be evident the ſtability of the Britiſh government can never be ſhaken by the efforts of any minority whatever. It comprehends within itſelf all the reſources of defence, which the beſt civil polity ought to poſſeſs. The permanence of every government muſt depend, however, after all, upon opinion, a general perſuaſion of its excellence, which can never be increaſed by its aſſuming a vindictive and ſanguinary aſpect. While it is the object of the people's approbation it will be continued, and to ſupport it much beyond that period, by mere force and terror, would be impoſſible were it juſt, and unjuſt were it poſſible. The law hath amply provided againſt *overt acts* of ſedition and diſorder, and to ſuppreſs *mere opinions* by any other method than reaſoning and argument is the height of tyranny.

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Freedom of thought being intimately connected with the happineſs and dignity of man in every ſtage of his being, is of ſo much more importance than the preſervation of any conſtitution, that to infringe the former under pretence of ſupporting the latter, is to ſacrifice the means to the end.

3. In attempting to define the boundary which ſeparates the liberty of the preſs from its licentiouſneſs, theſe ſocieties have undertaken a taſk which they are utterly unable to execute. The line that divides them is too nice and delicate to be perceived by every eye, or to be draw by every rude and unſkilful hand. When a public outrage againſt the laws is committed, the crime is felt in a moment; but to aſcertain the qualities which compoſe a libel, and to apply with exactneſs the general idea to every inſtance and example which may occur, demands an effort of thought and reflection, little likely to be exerted by the great maſs of mankind. Bewildered in a purſuit which they are incapable of conducting with propriety, taught to ſuſpect treaſon and ſedition in every page they read, and in every con-

converſation they hear, the neceſſary effect of ſuch an employment muſt be to perplex the underſtanding, and degrade the heart. An admirable expedient for transforming a great and generous people, into a contemptible tribe of ſpies and informers!

For private individuals to combine together at all with a view to quicken the vigour of criminal proſecution is ſuſpicious at leaſt, if not illegal; in a caſe where the liberty of the preſs is concerned all ſuch combinations are utterly improper. The faults and the excellencies of a book are often ſo blended, the motives of a writer ſo difficult to aſcertain, and the miſchiefs of ſervile reſtraint ſo alarming that the criminality of a book ſhould always be left to be determined by the particular circumſtances of the caſe. As one would rather ſee many criminals eſcape, than the puniſhment of one innocent perſon, ſo it is infinitely better a multitude of errors ſhould be propagated than one truth be ſuppreſſed.

If the ſuppreſſion of Mr. Paine's pamphlet be the object of theſe ſocieties, they are ridiculous in the extreme; for the circulation of

his works ceaſed from the moment they were declared a libel: if any other publication be intended, they are premature and impertinent, in preſuming to anticipate the deciſion of the courts.

4. Admitting however the principle on which they are founded to be ever ſo juſt and proper, they are highly impolitic. All violence exerted towards opinions which falls ſhort of *extermination*, ſerves no other purpoſe than to render them more known, and ultimately to increaſe the zeal and number of their abettors. Opinions that are falſe may be diſſipated by the force of argument; when they are true, their puniſhment draws toward them infallibly more of the public attention, and enables them to dwell with more laſting weight and preſſure on the mind. The progreſs of reaſon is aided in this caſe, by the paſſions, and finds in curioſity, compaſſion and reſentment, powerful auxiliaries.

When public diſcontents are allowed to vent themſelves in reaſoning and diſcourſe, they ſubſide into a calm; but their confinement in the boſom is apt to give them a fierce and deadly tincture,

The reaſon of this is obvious. As men are ſeldom diſpoſed to complain till they at leaſt imagine themſelves injured, ſo there is no injury which they will remember ſo long, or reſent ſo deeply, as that of being threatened into ſilence. This ſeems like adding triumph to oppreſſion, and inſult to injury. The apparent tranquility which may enſue, is deluſive and ominous; it is that awful ſtillneſs which nature feels, while ſhe is awaiting the diſcharge of the gathered tempeſt.

The profeſſed object of theſe aſſociations is to ſtrengthen the hands of government: but there is one way in which it may ſtrengthen its own hands moſt effectually; recommended by a very venerable authority, though one from which it hath taken but few leſſons. "He that hath *clean hands*, ſaith a ſage adviſer, ſhall grow ſtronger and ſtronger." If the Government wiſhes to become more vigorous, let it firſt become more pure, leſt an addition to its ſtrength ſhould only increaſe its capacity for miſchief.

There is a characteriſtic feature attending theſe aſſociations, which is ſufficient to acquaint us with their real origin and ſpirit, that is the ſilence almoſt

total, which they maintain reſpecting political abuſes. Had they been intended as their title imports, merely to furniſh an antidote to the ſpread of republican ſchemes and doctrines, they would have loudly aſſerted the neceſſity of reform, as a conciliatory principle, a centre of union, in which the virtuous of all deſcriptions might have concurred. But this, however conducive to the good of the people, would have defeated their whole project, which conſiſted in availing themſelves of an alarm which they had artfully prepared, in order to withdraw the public attention from real grievances to imaginary dangers. The Hercules of reform had penetrated the augean ſtable of abuſes; the fabric of corruption, hitherto deemed ſacred, began to totter, and its upholders were apprehenſive their iniquity was almoſt full. In this perplexity they embraced an occaſion afforded them by the ſpread of certain bold ſpeculations —(ſpeculations which owed their ſucceſs to the diſorders of government) to diffuſe a panic, and to drown the juſteſt complaints in unmeaning clamour. The plan of aſſociating, thus commencing in corruption, and propagated by

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imitation and by fear, had for its *pretext* the fear of republicaniſm; for its *object* the perpetuity of abuſes. Aſſociations in this light may be conſidered as mirrors placed to advantage for reflecting the fineſſes and tricks of the miniſtry. At preſent they are playing into each others hands, and no doubt find great entertainment in deceiving the nation. But let them be aware leſt it ſhould be found, after all, none are ſo much duped as themſelves. Wiſdom and truth, the offspring of the ſky, are immortal; but cunning and deception the meteors of the earth, after glittering for a moment muſt paſs away.

The candour and ſincerity of theſe aſſociators is of a piece with their other virtues: for while they profeſs to be combined in order to prevent riots and inſurrections, attempted to be raiſed by republicans and levellers, they can neither point out the perſons to whom that deſcription applies, nor mention a ſingle riot that was not fomented by their principles and engaged on their ſide. There have been three riots in England of late on a political account, one at Birmingham, one at Mancheſter, and one at Cambridge;

Cambridge; each of which have been levelled againſt diſſenters and friends of reform*.

The Crown and Anchor aſſociation, as it was firſt in order of time, ſeems alſo determined by puſhing to a greater length the maxims of arbitrary power, to maintain its pre-eminence in every other reſpect. The divine right of monarchy, the ſacred anointing of kings, paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtence, are the hemlock and night-ſhade which theſe phyſicians have preſcribed for the health of the nation; and are yet but a ſpecimen of a more fertile crop which they have promiſed out of the

* The conduct of an honourable member of the Houſe of Commons, reſpecting the laſt of theſe was extremely illiberal. He informed the houſe, that the riot at Cambridge was nothing more than that the mob compelled Mr. Muſgrave one of his conſtituents, who had been heard to ſpeak ſeditious words, to ſing God ſave the King—a ſtatement in which he was utterly miſtaken. Mr. Muſgrave, with whom I have the pleaſure of being well acquainted, was neither guilty of uttering ſeditious diſcourſe, nor did he, I am certain, comply with the requiſition. His whole crime conſiſts in the love of his country and a zeal for parliamentary reform. It would be happy for this nation, if a portion only, of the integrity and diſintereſted virtue which adorn his character, could be infuſed into our great men.

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hot-bed of their depravity. The opinions which they have aſſociated to ſuppreſs, are contained, they tell us, in the terms liberty and equality; after which they proceed to a dull harangue on the miſchiefs that muſt flow from equalizing property. All mankind, they gravely tell us, are not equal in virtue, as if that were not ſufficiently evident from the exiſtence of their ſociety. The notion of equality in property, was never ſeriouſly cheriſhed in the mind of any man, unleſs for the purpoſe of calumny: and the *term* tranſplanted from a neighbouring country, never intended *there* any thing more than *equality of rights*—as oppoſed to feudal oppreſſion and hereditary diſtinctions. An equality of rights may conſiſt with the greateſt inequality between the thing, to which thoſe rights extend. It belongs to the very nature of *property*, for the owner to have a full and complete right to that which he poſſeſſes, and conſequently for all proprietors to have *equal* rights, but who is ſo ridiculous as to infer from thence, that the *poſſeſſions* themſelves are equal. A more alarming idea cannot be ſpread among the people, than that there is a large party ready to

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abet them in any enterprise of depredation and plunder. As all men do not know that the element of the associators is calumny, they are really in danger for a while of being believed, and must thank themselves if they should realize the plan of equality their own malice has invented.

I am happy to find that Mr. Law, a very respectable gentleman, who had joined the Crown and Anchor society, has publicly withdraw his name, disgusted with their conduct; by whom we are informed they receive anonymous letters, vilifying the characters of persons of the first eminence, and that they are in avowed alliance with the ministry for prosecutions, whom they intreat to order the *Solicitor-General* to *proceed on their suggestions*. When such a society declares "*itself to be unconnected with any political party*," our respect for human nature impels us to believe it, and to hope their appearance may be considered as an æra in the annals of corruption, which will transmit their names to posterity with the encomiums they deserve. With sycophants so base and venal, no argument or remonstance can be expected to have any success.

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It is in vain to apply to reaſon when it is perverted and abuſed, to ſhame when it is extinguiſhed, to a conſcience which has ceaſed to admoniſh: I ſhall therefore leave them in the undiſturbed poſſeſſion of that true philoſophical indifference which ſteels them againſt the reproaches of their own hearts, and the contempt of all honeſt men.

All the aſſociations, it is true, do not breathe the ſpirit which diſgraces that of the Crown and Anchor. But they all concur in eſtabliſhing a political teſt, on the firſt appearance of which the friends of liberty ſhould make a ſtand. The opinions propoſed may be innocent; but the precedent is fatal, and the moment ſubſcription becomes the price of ſecurity, the rubicon is paſſed. Emboldened by the ſucceſs of this expedient, its authors will venture on more vigorous meaſures: teſt will ſteal upon teſt; the bounds of tolerated opinion will be continually narrowed, till we awake under the fangs of a relentleſs deſpotiſm.

SECTION III.

On a Reform of Parliament.

WHATEVER difference of opinion may take place in points of leſs importance, there is one in which the friends of freedom are entirely agreed, that is, the neceſſity of reform in the repreſentation. The theory of the Engliſh conſtitution preſents three independent powers; the king as executive head, with a negative in the legiſlature, an hereditary Houſe of Peers, and an aſſembly of Commons who are appointed to repreſent the nation at large. From this enumeration it is plain, the people of England can have no liberty, that is, no ſhare in forming the laws, but what they exert through the medium of the laſt of thoſe bodies; nor then, but in proportion to its independence of the other. The independence, therefore, of the Houſe of Commons, is the column on which the whole fabric of our liberty reſts. Repreſentation may be conſidered as complete when it collects to a ſufficient extent, and tranſmits with perfect fidelity, the

the real ſentiments of the people; but this it may fail of accompliſhing through various cauſes. If its electors are but a handful of people, and of a peculiar order and deſcription; if its duration is ſufficient to enable it to imbibe the ſpirit of a corporation; if its integrity be corrupted by treaſury influence, or warped by the proſpect of places and penſions; it may, by theſe means, not only fail of the end of its appointment, but fall into ſuch an entire dependence on the executive branch, as to become a moſt dangerous inſtrument of arbitrary power. The uſurpation of the emperors at Rome would not have been ſafe, unleſs it had concealed itſelf behind the formalties of a ſenate.

The confuſed and inadequate ſtate of our repreſentation, at preſent, is too obvious to eſcape the attention of the moſt careleſs obſerver. While through the fluctuation of human affairs, many towns of ancient note have fallen into decay, and the increaſe of commerce has raiſed obſcure hamlets to ſplendour and diſtinction, the ſtate of repreſentation ſtanding ſtill amidſt theſe vaſt changes, points back to an order of things which no longer ſubſiſts. The opulent towns of Birmingham,

ham, Mancheſter and Leeds, ſend no members to parliament; the decayed boroughs of Cornwall appoint a multitude of repreſentatives. Old Sarum ſends two members, though there are not more than one or two families reſide in it. The diſproportion between thoſe who vote for repreſentatives and the people at large is ſo great, that the majority of our Houſe of Commons is choſen by leſs than eight thouſand, in a kingdom conſiſting of as many millions. Mr. Burgh, in his excellent political diſquiſitions, has made a very laborious calculation on this head, from which it appears that the affairs of this great empire are decided by the ſuffrages of between five and ſix thouſand electors; ſo that our repreſentation inſtead of being co-extended with the people, fails of this in a proportion that is truly enormous. The qualifications, moreover, that confer the right of election, are capricious and irregular. In ſome places it belongs to the corporation, or to thoſe whom they think proper to make free; in ſome to every houſekeeper; in others it is attached to a particular eſtate, whoſe proprietor is abſolute lord of the borough, of which he makes his advantage, by repreſenting

ſing it himſelf, or diſpoſing of it to the beſt bidder. In counties, the right of election is annexed only to one kind of property, that of freehold; the proprietor of copyhold land being entirely deprived of it though his political ſituation is preciſely the ſame.

The conſequence of this perplexity in the qualifications of electors is often a tedious ſcrutiny and examination before a committee of the Houſe of Commons prolonged to ſuch a length, that there is no time when there are not ſome boroughs entirely unrepreſented. Theſe groſs defects in our repreſentation have ſtruck all ſenſible men very forcibly; even Mr. Paley, a courtly writer in the main, declares, the bulk of the inhabitants of this country have little more concern in the appointment of parliament, than the ſubjects of the Grand Seignior at Conſtantinople.

On the propriety of the ſeveral plans which have been propoſed to remedy theſe evils, it is not for me to decide; I ſhall chuſe rather to point out two general principles which ought, in my opinion, to pervade every plan of parliamentary reform; the firſt of which reſpects the mode of election, the ſecond the independance of the

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elected. In order to give the people a true repreſentation, let its baſis be enlarged, and the duration of parliaments ſhortened. The firſt of theſe improvements would diminiſh bribery and corruption, leſſen the violence and tumult of elections, and ſecure to the people a real, and unequivocal organ for the expreſſion of their ſentiments.

Were every houſeholder in town and country permitted to vote, the number of electors would be ſo great, that as no art or induſtry would be able to bias their minds, ſo no ſums of money would be ſufficient to win their ſuffrages. The plan which the Duke of Richmond recommended was, if I miſtake not, ſtill more comprehenſive, including all that were of age, except menial ſervants. By this means the different paſſions and prejudices of men would check each other, the predominance of any particular or local intereſt be kept down, and from the whole there would reſult that *general impreſſion*, which would convey with preciſion the unbiaſſed ſenſe of the people.

But beſides this, another great improvement in my opinion, would be, to ſhorten the dura-

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tion of parliament, by bringing it back to one year. The *Michel Gemote*, or great council of the kingdom, was appointed to meet under Alfred twice a year, and by divers ancient ſtatutes after the conqueſt, the king was bound to ſummon a parliament every year or oftener, if need be; when to remedy the looſeneſs of this latter phraſe, by the 16th of Charles the Second it was enacted, the holding of parliaments ſhould not be intermitted above three years at moſt; and in the firſt of King William, it is declared as one of the rights of the people, that for redreſs of all grievances and preſerving the laws, parliaments ought to be held frequently; which was again reduced to a certainty by another ſtatute, which enacts, that a new parliament ſhall be called within three years after the termination of the former. To this term did they continue limited till the reign of George the Firſt; when, after the rebellion of fifteen the ſeptennial act was paſſed, under the pretence of diminiſhing the expence of elections and preſerving the kingdom againſt the deſigns of the Pretender. A noble Lord obſerved, on that occaſion, he was at an utter loſs to deſcribe the nature of this

prolonged parliament, unleſs he were allowed to borrow a phraſe from the Athanaſian Creed; for it was, "neither created, nor begotten, but "proceeding." Without diſputing the upright intentions of the authors of this act, it is plain, they might on the ſame principle have voted themſelves perpetual, and their conduct will ever remain a monument of that ſhort-ſightedneſs in politics, which in providing for the preſſure of the moment puts to hazard the liberty and happineſs of future times. It is intolerable, that in ſo large a ſpace of a man's life as ſeven years, he ſhould never be able to correct the error he may have committed in the choice of a repreſentative, but be compelled to ſee him every year dipping deeper into corruption; a helpleſs ſpectator of the contempt of his intereſts, and the ruin of his country. During the preſent period of parliaments a nation may ſuſtain the greateſt poſſible changes; may deſcend by a ſucceſſion of ill counſels, from the higheſt pinnacle of its fortunes, to the loweſt point of depreſſion; its treaſure exhauſted, its credit ſunk, and its weight almoſt completely annihilated in the ſcale of empire. Ruin and felicity are ſeldom diſ-

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penſed by the ſame hand, nor is it likely any ſuccour in calamity ſhould flow from the wiſdom and virtue of thoſe by whoſe folly and wickedneſs it was incurred.

The union between a repreſentative and his conſtituents, ought to be ſtrict and entire; but the ſeptennial act has rendered it little more than nominal. The duration of parliament ſets its members at a diſtance from the people, begets a notion of independence, and gives the miniſter ſo much leiſure to inſinuate himſelf into their graces, that before the period is expired, they become very mild and complying. Sir Robert Walpole uſed to ſay, that "every man had his "price;" a maxim on which he relied with ſo much ſecurity, that he declared he ſeldom troubled himſelf with the election of members, but rather choſe to ſtay and buy them up when they came to market. A very intereſting work, lately publiſhed, entitled, "Anecdotes of Lord "Chatham," unfolds ſome parts of this myſtery of iniquity, which the reader will probably think equally new and ſurpriſing. There is a regular office, it ſeems, that of manager of the Houſe of Commons, which generally devolves on

one of the Secretaries of State, and conſiſts in ſecuring, at all events, a majority in parliament by a judicious application of promiſes and bribes. The ſums diſburſed by this honourable office are involved under the head of Secret Service Money; and ſo delicate is this employment of manager of the Houſe of Commons conſidered, that we have an account in the above-mentioned treatiſe, of a new arrangement of miniſtry, which failed for no other reaſon, than that the different parties could not agree on the proper perſon to fill it*.

* As I have taken my information on this head entirely on the authority of the work called Anecdotes of Lord Chatham, the reader may not be diſpleaſed with the following extract, vol. ii, page 121. "The management of the Houſe of Commons, as it is called, is a confidential department, unknown "to the conſtitution. In the public accounts it is immerſed "under the head of ſecret ſervice money. It is uſually given "to the ſecretary of ſtate when that poſt is filled by a commoner. The buſineſs of the department, is to diſtribute "with *art* and *policy* amongſt the members who have no "oſtenſible places, ſums of money, for their ſupport during "the ſeſſion; beſides contracts, lottery tickets, and other "douceurs. It is no uncommon circumſtance, at the end of "a ſeſſion, for a gentleman to receive five hundred or a thouſand pounds for *his ſervices*.

This ſecret influence which prevails, muſt be allowed to be extremely diſgraceful; nor can it ever be effectually remedied, but by contracting the duration of parliaments.

If it be objected to annual parliaments, that by this means the tumult and riot attendant on elections, will be oftener repeated, it ought to be remembered, that their duration is the chief ſource of theſe diſorders. Render a ſeat in the Houſe of Commons of leſs value, and you diminiſh at once the violence of the ſtruggle. In America, the election of repreſentatives takes place throughout that vaſt continent, in one day, with the greateſt tranquillity.

In a mixed conſtitution like ours, it is impoſſible to eſtimate the importance of an independent parliament; for as it is here our freedom conſiſts, if this barrier to the encroachments of arbitrary power once fails, we can oppoſe no other. Should the king attempt to govern without a parliament, or ſhould the upper houſe pretend to legiſlate, independently of the lower, we ſhould immediately take the alarm; but if the Houſe of Commons fall inſenſibly under the controul of the other two branches of the legiſlature, our danger is

greater, becauſe our apprehenſions may be leſs. The forms of a free conſtitution ſurviving when its ſpirit is extinct, would perpetuate ſlavery by rendering it more concealed and ſecure. On this account, I apprehend, did Monteſquieu predict the loſs of our freedom, from the legiſlative power becoming more corrupt than the executive; a criſis to which if it has not arrived already, it is haſtening apace. The immortal Locke, far from looking with the indifference too common on the abuſes in our repreſentation, conſidered all improper influence exerted in that quarter, as threatening the very diſſolution of government. "*Thus*, ſays he, *to regulate candidates and elect-*"*ors, and new model the ways of election, what is* "*it but to cut up the government by the roots, and* "*poiſon the very fountain of public ſecurity.*"

No enormity can ſubſiſt long without meeting with advocates; on which account we need not wonder, that the corruption of parliament has been juſtified under the mild denomination of influence, though it muſt pain every virtuous mind to ſee the enlightened Paley engaged in its defence. If a member votes conſiſtent with his convictions, his conduct in that inſtance has not

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been determined by influence; but if he votes otherwise, give it what gentle name you please, he forfeits his integrity; nor is it possible to mark the boundaries which should limit his compliance; for if he may deviate a little, to attain the See of Winchester, he may certainly step a little farther, to reach the dignity of Primate. How familiar must the practice of corruption have become, when a philosophical moralist, a minister of religion, of great talents and virtue, in the calm retreat of his study, does not hesitate to become its public apologist.

The necessity of a reform in the constitution of parliament is in nothing more obvious than in the ascendency of the aristocracy. This Colossus bestrides both houses of parliament; legislates in one and exerts a domineering influence over the other. It is humiliating at the approach of an election, to see a whole county send a deputation to an Earl or Duke, and beg a representative as you would beg an alms. A multitude of laws have been framed, it is true, to prevent all interference of peers in elections; but they neither are or can be effectual, while the House of Commons opens its doors to their sons and brethren.

theſe. If our liberty depends on the balance and controul of the reſpective orders in the ſtate, it muſt be extremely abſurd, to blend them together, by placing the father in one department of the legiſlature, and his family in the other.

Freedom is ſuppoſed by ſome to derive great ſecurity from the exiſtence of a regular oppoſition; an expedient which is, in my opinion, both the offspring and the cheriſher of faction. That a miniſter ſhould be oppoſed, when his meaſures are deſtructive to his country, can admit of no doubt; that a ſyſtematic oppoſition ſhould be maintained againſt any man, merely as a miniſter, without regard to the principles he may profeſs, or the meaſures he may propoſe, which is intended by a regular oppoſition, appears to me a moſt corrupt and unprincipled maxim. When a legiſlative aſſembly is thus thrown into parties, diſtinguiſhed by no leading principle, however warm and animated their debates, it is plain, they diſplay only a ſtruggle for the emoluments of office. This the people diſcern, and in conſequence, liſten with very little attention to the repreſentations of the miniſter on one hand, or the minority on the other; being perſuaded the only

only real difference between them is, that the one is anxious to gain, what the other is anxious to keep. If a meaſure be good it is of no importance to the nation from whom it proceeds; yet will it be eſteemed by the oppoſition a point of honour, not to let it paſs without throwing every obſtruction in its way. If we liſten to the miniſter for the time being, the nation is always flouriſhing and happy; if we hearken to the oppoſition, it is a chance if it be not on the brink of deſtruction. In an aſſembly convened to deliberate on the affairs of a nation, how diſguſting to hear the members prepetually talk of their connections, and their reſolution to act with a particular ſet of men, when if they have happened by chance, to vote according to their convictions rather than their party, half their ſpeeches are made up of apologies for a conduct ſo new and unexpected. When they ſee men united who agree in nothing but their hoſtility to the miniſter, the people fall at firſt into an amazement and irreſolution; till perceiving political debate is a mere ſcramble for profit and power, they endeavour to become as corrupt as their betters. It is not in that roar

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of faction which deafens the ear and ſickens the heart, the ſtill voice of Liberty is heard. She turns from the diſguſting ſcene, and regards theſe ſtruggles as the pangs and convulſions in which ſhe is doomed to expire.

The æra of parties, flowing from the animation of freedom, is ever followed by an æra of faction, which marks its feebleneſs and decay. Parties are founded on *principle*, factions on *men*; under the firſt, the people are contending reſpecting the ſyſtem that ſhall be purſued; under the ſecond, they are candidates for ſervitude, and are only debating *whoſe livery* they ſhall wear. The pureſt times of the Roman republic were diſtinguiſhed by violent diſſentions; but they conſiſted in the jealouſy of the ſeveral *orders* of the ſtate among each other; on the aſcendant of the patricians on the one ſide, and the plebeians on the other; a uſeful ſtruggle which maintained the balance and equipoiſe of the conſtitution. In the progreſs of corruption things took a turn: the permanent parties which ſprang from the fixed principles of the government were loſt, and the citizens arranged themſelves under the ſtandard of particular leaders, being bandied

into factions, under Marius or Sylla, Cæsar or Pompey; while the republic stood by without any interest in the dispute, a passive and helpless victim. The crisis of the fall of freedom in different nations, with respect to the causes that produce it, is extremely uniform. After the manner of the ancient factions, we hear much in England of the Bedford party, the Rockingham party; the Portland party; when it would puzzle the wisest man to point out their political distinction. The useful jealousy of the separate orders is extinct, being all melted down and blended into one mass of corruption. The House of Commons looks with no jealousy on the House of Lords, nor the House of Lords on the House of Commons; the struggle in both is maintained by the ambition of powerful individuals and families, between whom the kingdom is thrown as the prize, and the moment they unite, they perpetuate its subjection and divide its spoils.

From a late instance, we see they quarrel only about the partition of the prey, but are unanimous in defending it. To the honour of Mr. Fox, and the band of illustrious patriots of which he is the leader, it will however be remembered,

they ſtood firm againſt a hoſt of opponents, when aſſailed by every ſpecies of calumny and invective, they had nothing to expect but the reproaches of the preſent and the admiration of all future times. If any thing can rekindle the ſparks of freedom, it will be the flame of their eloquence; if any thing can reanimate her faded form, it will be the vigour of ſuch minds.

The diſordered ſtate of our repreſentation, it is acknowledged on all hands, muſt be remedied, ſome time or other; but it is contended, that it would be improper, at preſent, on account of the political ferment that occupies the minds of men and the progreſs of republican principles; a plauſible objection if delay can reſtore public tranquillity; but unleſs I am greatly miſtaken, it will have juſt a contrary effect. It is hard to conceive, how the diſcontent that flows from the abuſes of government can be allayed by their being perpetuated. If they are of ſuch a nature that they can neither be palliated nor denied, and are made the ground of invective againſt the whole of our conſtitution, are not they its beſt friends who wiſh to cut off this occaſion of ſcandal and complaint. The *Theory* of our conſtitution,

tion, we ſay, and juſtly, has been the admiration of the world; the cavils of its enemies, then, derive their force entirely from the diſagreement between that theory and its practice; nothing therefore remains, but to bring them as near as human affairs will admit to a perfect correſpondence. This will cut up faction by the roots, and immediately diſtinguiſh thoſe who wiſh to reform the conſtitution, from thoſe who wiſh its ſubverſion. Since the abuſes are real, the longer they are continued the more they will be known; the diſcontented will be always gaining ground, and though repulſed will return to the charge with redoubled vigour and advantage. Let reform be conſidered as a chirurgical operation, if you pleaſe, but ſince the conſtitution muſt undergo it or die, it is beſt to ſubmit, before the remedy becomes as dangerous as the diſeaſe. The example drawn from a neighbouring kingdom, as an argument for delay, ought to teach us a contrary leſſon. Had the encroachments of arbitrary power been ſteadily reſiſted, and remedies been applied, as evils appeared, inſtead of piling them up as precedents, the diſorders of government could never have ariſen to that enor-

mous height, nor would the people have been impelled to the dire neceſſity of building the whole fabric of political ſociety afreſh. It ſeems an infatuation in governments, that in tranquil times, they treat the people with contempt, and turn a deaf ear to their complaints; till public reſentment kindling, they find when it is too late, that in their eagerneſs to retain every thing, they have loſt all.

The pretences of Mr. Pitt and his friends for delaying this great buſineſs, are ſo utterly inconſiſtent, that it is too plain they are averſe in reality to its ever taking place. When Mr. Pitt is reminded that he himſelf, at the beginning of his miniſtry, recommended parliamentary reform, he replies, it was neceſſary then, on account of the calamitous ſtate of the nation, juſt emerged from an unſucceſsful war, and filled with gloom and diſquiet. But unleſs the people are libelled, they now are ſtill more diſcontented; with this difference, that their uneaſineſs formerly aroſe from events but remotely connected with unequal repreſentation; but that this is now the chief ground of complaint. It is abſurd, however, to reſt the propriety of reform on any turn of public affairs.

If it be not requiſite to ſecure our freedom, it is vain and uſeleſs; but if it be a proper means of preſerving that bleſſing, the nation will need it as much in peace as in war. When we wiſh to retain thoſe habits, which we know it were beſt to relinquiſh, we are extremely ready to be ſoothed with momentary pretences for delay, though they appear, on reflection, to be drawn from quite oppoſite topics, and therefore to be equally applicable to all times and ſeaſons.

A ſimilar deluſion is practiſed in the conduct of public affairs. If the people be tranquil and compoſed and have not caught the paſſion of reform; it is impolitic, ſay the miniſtry, to diſturb their minds, by agitating a queſtion that lies at reſt: if they are awakened, and touched with a conviction of the abuſe, we muſt wait, ſay they, till the ferment ſubſides, and not leſſen our dignity by ſeeming to yield to popular clamour: if we are at peace, and commerce flouriſhes, it is concluded we cannot need any improvement, in circumſtances ſo proſperous and happy; if, on the other hand, we are at war, and our affairs unfortunate, an amendment in the repreſentation is dreaded, as it would ſeem

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an acknowledgment, that our calamities flowed from the ill-conduct of parliament. Now, as the nation muſt always be in one or other of theſe ſituations, the concluſion is, the period of reform can never arrive at all.

This pretence for delay will appear the more extraordinary, in the Britiſh miniſtry, from a compariſon of the exploits they have performed, with the taſk they decline. They have found time for involving us in millions of debt; for cementing a ſyſtem of corruption, that reaches from the cabinet to the cottage; for carrying havoc and devaſtation to the remoteſt extremities of the globe; for accumulating taxes which famiſh the peaſant and reward the paraſite; for bandying the whole kingdom into factions, to the ruin of all virtue and public ſpirit; for the completion of theſe atchievements they have ſuffered no opportunity to eſcape them. Elementary treatiſes on time, mention various arrangements and diviſions, but none have ever touched on the chronology of ſtateſmen. Theſe are a generation, who meaſure their time not ſo much by the revolutions of the ſun, as by the revolutions of power. There are two æras

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particularly marked in their calendar; the one the period they are in the miniſtry, and the other when they are out: which have a very different effect on their ſentiments and reaſoning. Their courſe commences in the character of friends to the people, whoſe grievances they diſplay in all the colours of variegated diction. But the moment they ſtep over the threſhold of St. James's, they behold every thing in a new light; the taxes ſeem leſſened, the people riſe from their depreſſion, the nation flouriſhes in peace and plenty, and every attempt at improvement is like heightening the beauties of paradiſe, or mending the air of elyſium.

SECTION

SECTION IV.

On Theories and the Rights of Man.

AMONG the many alarming ſymptoms of the preſent time, it is not the leaſt, that there is a prevailing diſpoſition to hold in contempt, the *Theory* of liberty as falſe and viſionary. For my own part, it is my determination never to be deterred by an obnoxious name, from an open avowal of any principles that appear uſeful and important. Were the ridicule now caſt on the Rights of Man confined to a mere phraſe, as the title of a book, it were of little conſequence; but when *that* is made the pretence for deriding the doctrine itſelf, it is matter of ſerious alarm.

To place the rights of man as the baſis of lawful government, is not peculiar to Mr. Paine; but was done more than a century ago by men, of no leſs eminence than Sidney and Locke. It is therefore extremely diſingenuous to impute the ſyſtem to Mr. Paine as its author. His ſtructure

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may be falſe and erroneous, but the foundation was laid by other hands. That there are *natural rights*, or in other words, a certain liberty which men may exerciſe, independent of permiſſion from ſociety, can ſcarcely be doubted by thoſe who comprehend the meaning of the terms. Every man muſt have a natural right to uſe his limbs in what manner he pleaſes, that is not injurious to another. In like manner he muſt have a right to worſhip God after the mode he thinks acceptable; or in other words, he ought not to be compelled to conſult any thing but his own conſcience. Theſe are a ſpecimen of thoſe rights which may properly be termed *natural*; for, as philoſophers ſpeak of the primary qualities of matter, they cannot be increaſed or diminiſhed. We cannot conceive, the right of uſing our limbs to be created by ſociety, or to be rendered more complete by any human agreement or compact.

But there ſtill remains a queſtion, whether this natural liberty muſt not be conſidered as entirely relinquiſhed when we become members of ſociety. It is pretended, the moment we quite a ſtate of *nature*, as we give up the controul of our actions in return for the ſuperior advantages of law

and government; we can never appeal again to any original principles, but muſt reſt content with the advantages that are ſecured by the terms of the ſociety. Theſe are the views which diſtinguiſh the political writings of Mr. Burke, an author whoſe ſplendid and unequalled powers have given a vogue and faſhion to certain tenets, which from any other pen would have appeared abject and contemptible. In the field of reaſon the encounter would not be difficult, but who can withſtand the faſcination and magic of his eloquence. The excurſions of his genius are immenſe. His imperial fancy has laid all nature under tribute, and has collected riches from every ſcene of the creation, and every walk of art. His eulogium on the Queen of France is a maſterpiece of pathetic compoſition; ſo ſelect are its images, ſo fraught with tenderneſs, and ſo rich with colours, "dipt in heaven," that he who can read it without rapture may have merit as a reaſoner, but muſt reſign all pretenſions to taſte and ſenſibility. His imagination is in truth only too prolific: a world of itſelf, where he dwells in the midſt of chimerical alarms, is the dupe of his own enchantments

chantments, and ſtarts, like Proſpero, at the ſpectres of his own creation.

His intellectual views in general, however, are wide and variegated rather than diſtinct; and the light he has let in on the Britiſh conſtitution in particular, reſembles the coloured effulgence of a painted medium, a kind of mimic twilight, ſolemn and ſoothing to the ſenſes, but better fitted for ornament than uſe.

A book has lately been publiſhed, under the title of Happineſs and Rights, written by Mr. Hey, a reſpectable member of the Univerſity of Cambridge, whoſe profeſſed object is, with Mr. Burke, to overturn the doctrine of natural rights. The few remarks I may make upon it are leſs on account of any merit in the work itſelf, than on account of its author, who being a member of conſiderable ſtanding in the moſt liberal of our univerſities, may be preſumed to ſpeak the ſentiments of that learned body. The chief difference between his theory and Mr. Burke's ſeems to be the denial of the exiſtence of any rights that can be denominated natural, which Mr. Burke only ſuppoſes *reſigned* on the formation of political ſociety. The rights, ſays Mr. Hey, "*I can con-*

"*jecture (for it is but a conjecture) to belong to me*
"*as a mere man, are ſo uncertain, and comparatively*
"*ſo unimportant, while the rights I feel myſelf poſ-*
"*ſeſſed of in civil ſociety are ſo great, ſo numerous,*
"*and many of them ſo well defined, that I am ſtrong-*
"*ly inclined to conſider ſociety, as creating or giving*
"*my rights rather than recognizing and ſecuring*
"*what I could have claimed if I had lived in an*
"*unconnected ſtate.*" p. 137.

As government implies reſtraint, it is plain a portion of our freedom is given up, by entering into it; the only queſtion can then be, how far this reſignation extends, whether to a part or to the whole. This point may, perhaps, be determined by the following reflections.

1. The advantages that civil power can procure to a community are *partial*. A ſmall part, in compariſon of the condition of man, can fall within its influence. Allowing it to be a rational inſtitution, it muſt have that end in view, which a reaſonable man would propoſe by appointing it; nor can it imply any greater ſacrifice than is ſtrictly neceſſary to its attainment. But on what account is it requiſite to unite in political ſociety. Plainly to guard againſt the injury of others; for

for were there no injuſtice among mankind, no protection would be needed; no *public force* neceſſary; every man might be left without reſtraint or controul. The attainment of all poſſible good then is *not* the purpoſe of laws, but to ſecure us from external injury and violence; and as the means muſt be proportioned to the end; it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, by ſubmitting to civil power, with a view to ſome *particular* benefits, we ſhould be underſtood to hold all our advantages dependent upon that authority. Civil reſtraints imply nothing more, than a ſurrender of our liberty in ſome points, in order to maintain it undiſturbed in others of more importance. Thus we give up the liberty of repelling force by force, in return for a more equal adminiſtration of juſtice than private reſentment would permit. But there are ſome rights which cannot with any propriety be yielded up to human authority, becauſe they are perfectly conſiſtent with every benefit its appointment can procure. The free uſe of our faculties in diſtinguiſhing truth from falſehood, the exertion of corporeal powers without injury to others, the choice of a religion and worſhip, are branches of natural freedom which no

government can juſtly alter or diminiſh, becauſe their reſtraint cannot conduce to that ſecurity which is its proper object. Government, like every other contrivance, has a *ſpecific* end; it implies the reſignation of juſt as much liberty as is needful to attain it: whatever is demanded more, is ſuperfluous, a leaning to tyranny, which ought to be corrected by withdrawing it. The relation of maſter and ſervant, of pupil and inſtructor, of the reſpective members of a family to their head, all include ſome reſtraint, ſome abridgment of natural liberty. But in theſe caſes it is not pretended, the ſurrender is total, and why ſhould this be ſuppoſed to take place in political ſociety, which is *one* of the relations of human life: this would be to render the foundation infinitely broader than the ſuperſtructure.

2. From the notion that political ſociety precludes an appeal to natural rights, the greateſt abſurdities muſt enſue. If that idea be juſt, it is improper to ſay of any adminiſtration, it is deſpotic or oppreſſive, unleſs it has receded from its firſt form and model. Civil power can never exceed its limits, until it deviates into a new track. For if every portion of natural freedom

be given up by yielding to civil authority, we can never claim any other liberties than thoſe preciſe ones which were aſcertained in its firſt formation. The vaſſals of deſpotiſm may complain, perhaps, of the hardſhips which they ſuffer, but, unleſs it appear they are of *a new kind*, no injury is done them; for no right is violated. Rights are either natural or artificial; the firſt cannot be pleaded after they are relinquiſhed, and the ſecond cannot be impaired but by a departure from ancient precedents. If a man ſhould be unfortunate enough to live under the dominion of a prince, who, like the monarchs of Perſia, could murder his ſubjects at will, he may be unhappy, but cannot complain; for, on Mr. Hey's theory, he never had any rights but what were created by ſociety, and on Mr. Burke's he has for ever relinquiſhed them. The claims of *nature* being ſet aſide, and the conſtitution of the government deſpotic from the beginning, his miſery involves no injuſtice, and admits of no remedy. It requires little diſcernment to ſee that this theory rivets the chains of deſpotiſm, and ſhuts out from the political world the ſmalleſt glimpſe of emancipation or improvement.

Its

Its language is, he that is a ſlave let him be a ſlave ſtill.

3. It is incumbent on Mr. Burke and his followers to aſcertain the *time* when natural rights are relinquiſhed. Mr. Hey is content with tracing their exiſtence to ſociety, while Mr. Burke, more moderate of the two, admitting their foundation in nature, only contends that regular government abſorbs and ſwallows them up, beſtowing artificial advantages in exchange. But at what period it may be enquired ſhall we date this wonderful revolution in the ſocial condition of man. If we ſay it was as early as the firſt dawn of ſociety, natural liberty had never any exiſtence at all, ſince there are no traces even in tradition of a period when men were utterly unconnected with each other. If we ſay this complete ſurrender took place with the firſt rudiments of law and government in every particular community, on what principle were ſubſequent improvements introduced. Mr. Burke is fond of reſting our liberties on Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights; but he ought to remember, that as they do not carry us to the commencement of our government, which was

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eſtabliſhed ages before, our foreſathers had long ago reſigned their natural liberty. If thoſe famous ſtipulations only recognized ſuch privileges as were in force before, they have no claim to be conſidered as the foundations of our conſtitution; but if they formed an *æra* in the annals of freedom, they muſt have been erected on the baſis of thoſe natural rights which Mr. Burke ridicules and explodes. When our anceſtors made thoſe demands, it is evident they did not ſuppoſe an appeal to the rights of nature precluded. Every ſtep a civilized nation can take towards a more equal adminiſtration, is either an aſſertion of its natural liberty, or a criminal encroachment on juſt authority. The influence of government on the ſtock of natural rights, may be compared to that of a manufactory on the rude produce; it adds nothing to its quantity, but only qualifies and fits it for uſe. Political arrangement is more or leſs perfect in proportion as it enables us to exert our natural liberty to the greateſt advantage; if it is diverted to any other purpoſe, is made the inſtrument of gratifying the paſſions of a few, or impoſes

greater reſtraint than its object preſcribes, it degenerates into tyranny and oppreſſion.

The greateſt objection to theſe principles is their perſpicuity, which makes them ill reliſhed by thoſe whoſe intereſt it is to hide the nature of government from vulgar eyes, and induce a perſuaſion, that it is a ſecret which can only be unfolded to the *initiated* under the conduct of Mr. Burke, the great *Hierophant* and revealer of the myſteries. A myſtery and a trick are generally two ſides of the ſame object, according as it is turned to the view of the beholder.

The doctrine of Mr. Locke and his followers is founded on the natural equality of mankind; for as no man can have any natural or inherent right to rule any more than another, it neceſſarily follows, that a claim to dominion, wherever it is lodged, muſt be ultimately referred back to the explicit or implied conſent of the people. Whatever ſource of civil authority is aſſigned different from this, will be found to reſolve itſelf into *mere force*. But as the natural equality of one generation is the ſame with that of another, the people have always the ſame right to new

model

model their government, and ſet aſide their rulers. This right, like every other, may be exerted capriciouſly and abſurdly; but no human power can have any pretenſions to intercept its exerciſe. For civil rulers cannot be conſidered as having any claims, that are co-extended with thoſe of the people, nor as forming a party ſeparate from the nation. They are appointed by the community to *execute* its will, not to *oppoſe* it; to manage the *public*, not to purſue any *private* or *particular* intereſts. Are all the exiſting authorities in a ſtate, to lie then, it may be ſaid, at the mercy of the populace, liable to be diſſipated by the firſt breath of public diſcontent? By no means: they are to be reſpected and obeyed, as interpreters of the public will. Till they are ſet aſide by the unequivocal voice of the people, they are a law to every member of the community. To reſiſt them is rebellion; and for any particular ſet of men to attempt their ſubverſion by force, is a heinous crime, as they repreſent and embody the collective majeſty of the ſtate. They are the exponents, to uſe the language of algebra, of the preciſe quantity of liberty the people have thought fit to legalize

and ſecure. But though they are a law to every member of the ſociety ſeparately conſidered, they cannot bind the ſociety itſelf, or prevent it, when it ſhall think proper, from forming an entire new arrangement; a right that no compact can aleniate or diminiſh, and which has been exerted as often as a free government has been formed. On this account, in reſolving the right of dominion into compact, Mr. Locke appears to me ſomewhat inconſiſtent, or he has expreſſed himſelf with leſs clearneſs and accuracy than was uſual with that great philoſopher. There muſt have been a previous right to inſiſt on ſtipulations, in thoſe who formed them; nor is there any reaſon why one race of men is not as competent to that purpoſe as another.

With the enemies of freedom, it is a uſual artifice to repreſent the ſovereignty of the people as a licence to anarchy and diſorder. But the tracing up civil power to that ſource will not diminiſh our obligation to obey; it only explains its reaſons, and ſettles it on clear determinate principles. It turns blind ſubmiſſion into rational obedience, tempers the paſſion for liberty with the love of order, and places mankind in a

happy

happy medium, between the extremes of anarchy on the one ſide, and oppreſſion on the other. It is the polar ſtar that will conduct us ſafe over the ocean of political debate and ſpeculation, the law of laws, the legiſlator of legiſlators.

To reply to all the objections that have been advanced againſt this doctrine, would be a uſeleſs taſk, and exhauſt the patience of the reader; but there is one drawn from the idea of a majority, much inſiſted on by Mr. Burke, and Mr. Hey, of which the latter gentleman is ſo enamoured, that he has ſpread it out into a multitude of pages. They aſſert, that the theory of natural rights, can never be realized, becauſe every member of the community cannot concur in the choice of a government, and the minority being compelled to yield to the deciſions of the majority, are under tyrannical reſtraint. To this reaſoning it is a ſufficient anſwer, that if a number of men are to act together at all, the neceſſity of being determined by the ſenſe of the majority, in the laſt reſort, is ſo obvious, that it is always implied. An exact concurrence of many particular wills, is impoſſible, and therefore when each taken ſeparately has preciſely

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the ſame influence, there can be no hardſhip in ſuffering the reſult to remain at iſſue, till it is determined by the coincidence of the greater number. The idea of *natural liberty* at leaſt, is ſo little violated by this method of proceeding, that it is no more than what takes place every day in the ſmalleſt ſociety, where the neceſſity of being determined by the voice of the majority is ſo plain, that it is ſcarcely ever reflected upon. The defenders of the rights of man, mean not to contend for impoſſibilities. We never hear of a right to fly, or to make two and two five. If the majority of a nation approve its government, it is in this reſpect as free as the ſmalleſt aſſociation or club; any thing beyond which muſt be viſionary and romantic.

The next objection Mr. Hey inſiſts upon, is, if poſſible, ſtill more frivolous, turning on the caſe of young perſons during minority. He contends, that as ſome of theſe have more ſenſe than may be found among common mechanics, and the loweſt of the people, *natural right* demands their inclinations to be conſulted in political arrangements. Were there any method

of aſcertaining exactly the degree of underſtanding poſſeſſed by young perſons during their minority, ſo as to diſtinguiſh early intellects from the leſs mature, there would be ſome force in the objection; in the preſent caſe, the whole ſuppoſition is no more than one of thoſe chimeras which this gentleman is ever fond of combating, with the ſame gravity, and to as little purpoſe, as Don Quixote his windmill.

The period of minority it is true, varies in different countries, and is perhaps beſt determined every where by ancient cuſtom and habit. An early maturity may confer on ſixteen, more ſagacity than is, ſometimes, found at ſixty; but what then? A wiſe government having for its object, human nature at large, will be adapted, not to its accidental deviations, but to its uſual aſpects and appearances. For an anſwer to his argument againſt natural rights, drawn from the excluſion of women from political power, I beg leave to refer the author to the ingenious Miſs Wolſtencroft, the eloquent patroneſs of female claims; unleſs, perhaps, every other empire may appear mean in the eſtimation of thoſe, who

poſſeſs

poſſeſs, with an uncontrouled authority, the empire of the heart.

"The ſituation," ſays Mr. Hey, (p. 137) "in "which any man finds himſelf placed, when he "arrives at the power of reflecting, appears to "be the conſequence of a vaſt train of events, "extending backwards hundreds or thouſands "of years, for aught he can tell, and totally "baffling all the attempts at comprehenſion by "human faculties."

From hence he concludes, all enquiry into the rights of man ſhould be forborne. "What "rights this Being (God) may have poſſibly "intended that I might claim from beings like "myſelf, if he had thought proper that I had "lived amongſt them in an *unconnected* ſtate, "that is to ſay, what are the rights of a mere "*man*, appears a queſtion involved in ſuch "obſcurity, that I cannot trace even any in-"dication of that Being having intended me to "enquire into it."

If any thing be intended by theſe obſervations, it is, that we ought never to attempt to meliorate our condition, till we are perfectly acquainted with its cauſes. But as the ſubjects of the worſt govern-

government are, probably, as ignorant of the train of events for ſome thouſands of years back, as thoſe who enjoy the beſt, they are to reſt contented, it ſeems, until they can clear up that obſcurity, and enquire no farther.

It would ſeem ſtrange to preſume an inference good, from not knowing how we arrived at it. Yet this ſeems as reaſonable as to ſuppoſe the political circumſtances of a people fit and proper, on account of our inability to trace the cauſes that produced them. To know the ſource of an evil, is only of conſequence, as it may chance to conduct us to the remedy. But the whole paragraph I have quoted, betrays the utmoſt perplexity of thought; confounding the *civil condition* of individuals, with the political inſtitution of a ſociety. The former will be infinitely various in the ſame community, ariſing from the different character, temper, and ſucceſs of its members: the latter unites and prevades the whole, nor can any abuſes attach to it, but what may be diſplayed and remedied.

It is perfectly diſingenuous in this author, to repreſent his adverſaries, as deſirous of com-

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mitting the buſineſs of legiſlation indiſcriminately to the meaneſt of mankind*. He well knows the wildeſt democratical writer contends for nothing more than popular government, by *repreſentation*. If the labouring part of the people are not competent to *chuſe* legiſlators, the Engliſh conſtitution is eſſentially wrong; eſpecially in its preſent ſtate, where the importance of each vote is enhanced by the paucity of the electors.

After the many examples of miſrepreſentation which this author has furniſhed, his declamations on the levelling ſyſtem, cannot be matter of ſurpriſe. An equality of right is perfectly

* "A man whoſe hands and ideas have been uſefully "confined for thirty or forty years to the labour and man- "agement of a farm, or the conſtruction of a wall, or "piece of cloth, does indeed, in one reſpect, appear ſuperior "to an infant three months old. The man could make a "law of ſome ſort or other; the infant could not. The "man could in any particular circumſtances of a nation, ſay "thoſe words, We will go to war, or we will not go to war: "the infant could not. But the difference between them is "more in appearance than in any uſeful reality. The man "is totally unqualified to judge what ought to be enacted "for laws." Hey, p. 31.

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conſiſtent with the utmoſt diſproportion between the objects to which they extend. A peaſant may have the ſame right to the exertion of his faculties with a Newton; but this will not fill up the vaſt chaſm that ſeparates them.

The miniſtry will feel great obligations to Mr. Hey, for putting off the evil day of reform to a far diſtant period,—a period ſo remote, that they may hope before it is completed, their names and their actions will be buried in friendly oblivion. He indulges a faint expectation, he tells us, that the practice of governments may be improved "*in two or three thouſand years.*"

A ſmaller edition of this work has lately been publiſhed, conſiderably abridged, for the uſe of the poor, who, it may be feared, will be very little benefitted by its peruſal. Genius may dazzle, eloquence may perſuade, reaſon may convince; but to render popular cold and comfortleſs ſophiſtry, unaided by thoſe powers, is an hopeleſs attempt.

I have treſpaſſed, I am afraid, too far on the patience of my readers, in attempting to expoſe the fallacies by which the followers of Mr. Burke perplex the underſtanding, and endeavour

to hide in obſcurity the true ſources of political power. Were there indeed any impropriety in laying them open, the blame would not fall on the friends of freedom, but on the provocation afforded by the extravagance and abſurdity of its enemies. If princely power had never been raiſed to a level with the attributes of the divinity, by Filmer, it had probably never been ſunk as low as popular acquieſcence by Locke. The confuſed mixture of liberty and oppreſſion, which ran through the feudal ſyſtem, prevented the theory of government from being cloſely inſpected: particular rights were ſecured, but the relation of the people to their rulers was never explained on its juſt principles, till the transfer of ſuperſtition to civil power, ſhocked the common ſenſe of mankind, and awakened their inquiries. They drew aſide the veil, and where they were taught to expect a myſtery, they diſcerned a fraud. There is however no room to apprehend any evil from political inveſtigation, that will not be greatly overbalanced by its advantages. For beſides that truth is always beneficial; tame ſubmiſſion to uſurped power, has hitherto been the malady of human nature.

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The diſperſed ſituation of mankind, their indolence and inattention, and the oppoſition of their paſſions and intereſts, are circumſtances which render it extremely difficult for them to combine in reſiſting tyranny with ſucceſs. In the field of government, as in that of the world, *the tares of deſpotiſm were ſown while men ſlept!* The neceſſity of regular government, under ſome form or other, is ſo preſſing, that the evil of anarchy is of ſhort duration. Rapid, violent, deſtructive in its courſe, it is an inundation which fed by no conſtant ſpring, ſoon dries up and diſappears. The misfortune on theſe occaſions, is, that the people, for want of underſtanding the principles of liberty, ſeldom reach the true ſource of their miſery, but after committing a thouſand barbarities, only change their maſters, when they ſhould change their ſyſtem.

SECTION

SECTION V.

On Diſſenters.

OF that foul torrent of inſult and abuſe, which it has lately been the lot of the friends of liberty to ſuſtain, a larger portion hath fallen to the ſhare of Diſſenters than any other deſcription of men. Their ſentiments have been miſrepreſented, their loyalty ſuſpected, and their moſt illuſtrious characters held up to deriſion and contempt. The aſhes of the dead have been as little ſpared as the merit of the living; and the ſame breath that has attempted to depreciate the talents and virtues of a Prieſtley, is employed to blacken the memory of a Price. The effuſions of a diſtempered loyalty, are mingled with execrations on that unfortunate ſect; as if an attachment to the King were to be meaſured by an hatred to Diſſenters. Without any ſhadow of criminality, they are doomed to ſuſtain perpetual inſult and reproach; their repoſe

 diſturbed,

disturbed, and their lives threatened and endangered. If dissent be in truth, a crime of such magnitude, that it must not be tolerated, let there be at least a punishment prescribed by law that they may know what they have to expect, and not lie at the mercy of an enraged and deluded populace. It is natural to enquire into the cause of this extreme virulence against a particular class of the community, who are distinguished from others, only by embracing a different form and system of worship.

In the practice of the moral virtues, it will hardly be denied, that they are at least as exemplary as their neighbours; while in the more immediate duties of religion, if there be any distinction, it lies in their carrying to a greater height, sentiments of seriousness and devotion. The nature of their *public conduct* will best appear from a rapid survey of some of those great political events in which it has had room to display itself; where, though our history has been ransacked to supply invective, it will be seen, their merits more than compensate for any errors they may have committed. Their zeal in opposing Charles, has been an enternal theme of reproach;

reproach; but it ſhould be remembered, that when that reſiſtence firſt took place, the parliament conſiſted for the moſt part of churchmen, and was fully juſtified in its oppoſition, by the arbitrary meaſures of the court. Had the pretenſions of Charles been patiently acquieſced in, our government had long ago been deſpotic.

What medium might have been found between tame ſubmiſſion and open hoſtility, and whether matters were not afterwards puſhed to an extremity againſt the unfortunate monarch, it is not for me to determine, nor does it concern the vindication of Diſſenters. For long before the final cataſtrophe which iſſued in the king's death, the favourable intentions of parliament were overruled by the aſcendancy of Cromwell; the parliament itſelf oppreſſed by his arms, and the influence both of churchmen and diſſenters, bent under military uſurpation. The execution of Charles was the deed of a faction, condemned by the great body of the puritans as a criminal ſeverity. But whatever blame they may be ſuppoſed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles; the merit of reſtoring monarchy in his ſon was all their own. The entire force of the

empire

empire was in their hands; Monk himſelf of their party; the parliament, the army all puritans; yet were they diſintereſted enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reins into his hands, with no other ſtipulation, than that of liberty of conſcience; which he violated with a baſeneſs and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them for the recovery of his power, conſiſted in depriving two thouſand of their miniſters, and involving the whole body in a perſecution, by which not leſs than ten thouſand are ſuppoſed to have periſhed in impriſonment and want. But their patriotiſm was not to be ſhaken by theſe injuries. When towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign, the character of his ſucceſſor inſpired a dread of the eſtabliſhment of popery, to avert that evil they chearfully acquieſced in an excluſion from all places of emolument and truſt; an extraordinary inſtance of magnanimity. When James the Second began to diſplay arbitrary views, diſſenters were among the firſt to take the alarm, regarding with jealouſy, even an indulgence when it flowed from a diſpenſing power. The zeal with which they co-operated in bringing about the revolution,

the ardour with which they have always eſpouſed its principles, are too well known to need any proof, and can only be rendered more ſtriking by a contraſt with the conduct of the high-church party. The latter maintained in its utmoſt extent, the doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtence; were inceſſantly engaged in intrigues to overturn the revolution, and affirmed the doctrine of divine right to be an ancient and indiſputable tenet of the Engliſh church. Whoever wiſhes to aſcertain the exiſtence of thoſe arts, by which they embroiled the reign of King William, may ſee them diſplayed at large in Burnet's Hiſtory of his own Times.

The attachment of diſſenters to the houſe of Hanover, was ſignalized in a manner too remarkable to be ſoon forgotten. In the rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, they ventured on a breach of the law, by raiſing and officering regiments out of their own body; for which the parliament were reduced to the awkward expedient of paſſing an act of indemnity. This ſhort ſketch of their political conduct, as it is ſufficient to eſtabliſh their loyalty beyond ſuſpicion, ſo may it well augment our ſurpriſe at the extreme obloquy and

reproach

reproach with which they are treated. Mr. Hume a competent judge, if ever there was one, of political principles, and who was far from being partial to diſſenters, candidly confeſſes that to them we are indebted for the preſervation of liberty.

The religious opinions of diſſenters are ſo various, that there is perhaps no point in which they are agreed, except in aſſerting the rights of conſcience againſt all human controul and authority. From the time of Queen Elizabeth, under whom they began to make their appearance, their views of religious liberty have gradually extended, commencing at firſt with a diſapprobation of certain rites and ceremonies, the remains of papal ſuperſtition. Their total ſeparation from the church did not take place for more than a century, till deſpairing of ſeeing it erected on a comprehenſive plan, and being moreover perſecuted for their difference of ſentiment, they were compelled at laſt, reluctantly to withdraw. Having been thus directed by a train of events into the right path, they puſhed their principles to their legitimate conſequences, and began to diſcern the impropriety of all religious eſtabliſhments what-

ever, a ſentiment in which they are now nearly united. On this very account, however, of all men they are leaſt likely to diſturb the peace of ſociety; for they claim no other liberty than what they wiſh the whole human race to poſſeſs, that of deciding on every queſtion where conſcience is concerned. It is ſufferance they plead for, not eſtabliſhment; protection, not ſplendour. A diſpoſition to impoſe their religion on others cannot be ſuſpected in men, whoſe diſtinguiſhing religious tenet, is the diſavowal of all human authority.

Their opinion reſpecting eſtabliſhments is founded upon reaſons which appear to them weighty and ſolid. They have remarked, that in the three firſt and pureſt ages of religion, the church was a ſtranger to any alliance with temporal powers; that far from needing their aid chriſtianity never flouriſhed ſo much as while they were combined to ſuppreſs it; and that the protection of Conſtantine though well intended, diminiſhed from its purity, more than it added to its ſplendour.

The only pretence for uniting chriſtianity with civil government, is the ſupport it yields to the peace

peace and good order of ſociety. But this benefit will be derived from it, at leaſt in as great a degree, without an eſtabliſhment as with it. Religion, if it have any power, operates on the *conſcience* of men. Reſting ſolely on the belief of inviſible realities, and having for its object the good and evil of eternity, it can derive no additional weight or ſolemnity from human ſanctions; but will appear to the moſt advantage upon hallowed ground, remote from the noiſe and tumults of wordly policy. Can it be imagined that a diſſenter, who believes in divine revelation, does not feel the ſame moral reſtraints, as if he had received his religion from the hands of parliament? Human laws may debaſe chriſtianity, but can never improve it; and being able to add nothing to its evidence, they can add nothing to its force.

Happy had it been, however, had civil eſtabliſhments of religion been *uſeleſs* only, inſtead of being productive of the greateſt evils. But when chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed by law, it is requiſite to give the preference to ſome particular ſyſtem: and as the magiſtrate is no better judge of religion than others, the chances are as great of his

lending his ſanction to the falſe as to the true. Splendour and emolument muſt likewiſe be in ſome degree attached to the national church: which are a ſtrong inducement to its miniſters to defend it, be it ever ſo remote from the truth. Thus error becomes permanent, and that ſet of opinions which happens to prevail when the eſtabliſhment is formed, continues in ſpite of ſuperior light and improvement, to be handed down without alteration from age to age. Hence the diſagreement between the public creed of the church and the private ſentiments of its miniſters; an evil growing out of the very nature of an hierarchy, and not likely to be remedied before it brings the clerical character into the utmoſt contempt. Hence the rapid ſpread of infidelity in various parts of Europe; a natural and never-failing conſequence of the corrupt alliance between church and ſtate. Wherever we turn our eyes, we ſhall perceive the depreſſion of religion is in proportion to the elevation of the hierarchy. In France, where the eſtabliſhment had attained the utmoſt ſplendour, piety had utterly decayed; in England, where the hierarchy is leſs ſplendid, more remains of the

the latter; and in Scotland, whoſe national church is one of the pooreſt in the world, a greater ſenſe of religion appears among the inhabitants, than in either of the former. It muſt likewiſe be plain to every obſerver, that piety flouriſhes much more among diſſenters, than among the members of any eſtabliſhment whatever. This progreſs of things is ſo natural, that nothing ſeems wanting in any country, to render the thinking part of the people infidels but a ſplendid eſtabliſhment. It will always ultimately debaſe the clerical character, and perpetuate both in diſcipline and doctrine, every error and abuſe.

Turn a chriſtian ſociety into an eſtabliſhed church, and it is no longer a voluntary aſſembly for the worſhip of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of ſuch ſentiments, and paſſions, as uſually diſtinguiſh thoſe bodies; a dread of of innovation, and attachment to abuſes, a propenſity to tyranny and oppreſſion. Hence the convulſions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in queſtion is little regarded, amidſt the alarm that is felt for the ſplendour, opulence, and power, which they

are the means of ſupporting. To this alliance of chriſtianity with civil power, is it owing that eccleſiaſtical hiſtory preſents a chaos of crimes; and that the progreſs of religious opinions, which left to itſelf had been calm and ſilent, may be traced in blood.

Among the evils attending the alliance of church and ſtate, it is not the leaſt that it begets a notion of their intereſts having ſome kind of inſeparable though myſterious connexion; ſo that they who are diſſatisfied with the one, muſt be enemies to the other. Our very language is tinctured with this deluſion, in which church and king are blended together with an arrogance that ſeems copied from Cardinal Woolſey's *Ego et rex meus*, I and my king; as if the eſtabliſhment were of more conſequence than the ſovereign who repreſents the collective majeſty of the ſtate. Let the interference of civil power be withdrawn, and the animoſity of ſects will ſubſide for want of materials to inflame it, nor will any man ſuſpect his neighbour for being of a different religion more than for being of a different complexion from himſelf. The practice of toleration it is true has much abated the violence

violence of thoſe convulſions which, for more than a century from the beginning of the reformation, ſhook Europe to its baſe; but the ſource and ſpring of intolerance is by no means exhauſted. The ſtream from that infernal pit will iſſue though the crevices, untill they are filled up with the *ruins* of all human eſtabliſhments.

The alliance between church and ſtate is in a *political point of view* extremely ſuſpicious, and much better fitted to the genius of an arbitrary than a free government. To the former it may yeild a powerful ſupport; to the latter it muſt ever prove dangerous. The ſpiritual ſubmiſſion it exacts is unfavourable to mental vigour, and prepares the way for a ſervile acquieſcence in the encroachments of civil authority. This is ſo correſpondent with *facts*, that the epithet high church when applied to politics is familiarly uſed in our language to convey the notion of arbitrary maxims of government.

As far as ſubmiſſion to civil magiſtrates is a branch of moral virtue, chriſtianity will under every form be ſure to enforce it; for among the various ſects and parties into which its profeſ-

ſion is divided, there ſubſiſts an entire agreement reſpecting the moral duties it preſcribes. To ſelect therefore and endow a *particular order* of clergy to teach the duties of ſubmiſſion is uſeleſs as a mean to ſecure the peace of ſociety, though well fitted to produce a ſlaviſh ſubjection. Miniſters of that deſcription, conſidering themſelves as allies of the ſtate, yet having no civil department, will be diſpoſed on all occaſions to ſtrike in with the current of the court; nor are they likely to confine the obligation to obedience within any juſt and reaſonable bounds. They will inſenſibly become an army of ſpiritual janizaries. Depending as they every where muſt, upon the ſovereign, his prerogative can never be exalted too high for their emolument, nor can any better inſtruments be contrived for the accompliſhment of arbitrary deſigns. Their compact and united form, compoſing a chain of various links which hangs ſuſpended from the throne, admirably fits them for conveying that impreſſion that may ſooth, inflame, or miſlead the people.

Theſe are the evils which in my opinion attach to civil eſtabliſhments, of chriſtianity. They are indeed

indeed often mitigated by the virtue of their members, and among the Engliſh clergy in particular as ſplendid examples of virtue and talents might be produced as any which the annals of human nature can afford, but in all our reaſonings concerning *men*, we muſt lay it down as a maxim, that greater part are moulded by circumſtances. If we wiſh to ſee the *true ſpirit* of an hierarchy, we have only to attend to the conduct of what is uſually termed the high-church party.

While they had ſufficient influence with the legiſlature, they impelled it to perſecute; and now that a more enlightened ſpirit has brought that expedient into diſgrace, they turn to the people, and endeavour to inflame their minds by the arts of calumny and detraction. When the diſſenters applied for the repeal of the corporation and teſt-acts, an alarm was ſpread of the church being in danger, and their claim was defeated. From the late oppoſition of the Biſhops to the repeal of the penal ſtatutes, we learn they have loſt the power rather than the inclination to perſecute, or they would be happy to aboliſh the monuments of a ſpirit they ceaſed to

approve. The nonſenſe and abſurdity compriſed in that part of our laws would move laughter in a company of peaſants; but nothing is thought mean or contemptible which is capable of being forged into a weapon of hoſtility againſt diſſenters. To perpetuate laws which there is no intention to execute, is certainly the way to bring law into contempt; but the truth is, that unwilling to relinquiſh the right of perſecution, though they have no immediate opportunity of exerting it, they retain theſe ſtatutes as a body in reſerve, ready to be brought into the field on the firſt occaſion that ſhall offer.

The prejudice entertained againſt us, is not the work of a day, but the accumulation of ages, flowing from the fixed antipathy of a numerous and powerful order of men, diſtributed through all the claſſes of ſociety; nor is it eaſy to conceive to what a pitch popular reſentment may be inflamed by artful management and contrivance. Our ſituation in this reſpect bears a near reſemblance to that of primitive Chriſtians, againſt whom, though in themſelves the moſt inoffenſive of mankind, the malice of the populace was directed, to a ſtill greater degree, by

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ſimilar arts, and upon ſimilar principles. The clamour of the fanatic rabble, the devout execration of diſſenters, will remind the reader of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory of the exceſſes of pagan ferocity, when the people, inſtigated by their prieſts, were wont to exclaim, *chriſtianos ad leones.* There is the leſs hope of this animoſity being allayed, from its having ariſen from *permanent cauſes.* That chriſtianity is a ſimple inſtitution, unallied to worldly power, that a church is a voluntary ſociety, inveſted with a righe to chuſe its own officers, and acknowledging no head but Jeſus Chriſt, that miniſters are brethren whoſe emolument ſhould be confined to the voluntary contributions of the people, are maxims drawn from ſo high an authority, that it may well be apprehended the church is doomed to vaniſh before them. Under theſe circumſtances, whatever portion of talents or of worth diſſenters may poſſeſs, ſerves only to render them more hated, becauſe more formidable. Had they merely revelled with the wanton, and drunk with the drunken, had they been cloathed with curſes, they might have been honoured and eſteemed notwithſtanding as true

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ſons of the church; but their diſſent is a crime too indelible in the eyes of their enemies for any virtue to alleviate, or any merit to efface.

Till the teſt buſineſs was agitated, however, we were not aware of our labouring under ſuch a weight of prejudice. Confiding in the mildneſs of the times, and conſcious that every trace of reſentment was vaniſhed from our own breaſts, we fondly imagined thoſe of churchmen were equally replete with ſentiments of generoſity and candour. We accordingly ventured on a renewal of our claim as men, and as citizens; but had not proceeded far before we were aſſailed with the bittereſt reproaches. The innocent deſign of relieving ourſelves from a diſgraceful proſcription, was conſtrued by our enemies into an attack on the church and ſtate. Their oppoſition was both more violent and more formidable than was expected. They let us ſee, that however languidly the flame of their devotion may burn, that of reſentment and party ſpirit, like veſtal fire, muſt never be extinguiſhed in their temples. Calumnies continued to be propagated, till they produced the riots at Birmingham, that ever-memorable æra in the annals

annals of bigotry and fanaticism, when Europe beheld, with aſtoniſhment and regret, the outrage ſuſtained by philoſophy in the moſt enlightened of countries, and in the firſt of her ſons! When we hear ſuch exceſſes as theſe juſtified and applauded, we ſeem to be falling back apace into the darkneſs of the middle ages.

The connection between civil and religious liberty is too intimate to make it ſurpriſing, that they who are attached to the one, ſhould be friendly to the other. The diſſenters have accordingly ſeldom failed to lend their ſupport to men, who ſeemed likely to reſtore the vigour of a ſinking conſtitution. Parliamentary reform has been cheriſhed by them with an ardour equal to its importance. This part of their character inflames oppoſition ſtill farther; and affords a pretext to their enemies for overwhelming the cauſe of liberty under an obnoxious name. The reproach on this head, however, is felt as an honour, when it appears by their conduct they deſpair of attacking liberty with ſucceſs, while the reputation of diſſenters remains undiminiſhed. The enmity of the vicious is the teſt of virtue.

Diſſenters are reproached with the appellation of republicans; but the truth of the charge has neither appeared from facts, or been ſupported by any reaſonable evidence. Among them, as among other claſſes (and in no greater proportion) there are perſons to be found, no doubt, who, without any hoſtility to the preſent government, prefer in theory a republican to a monarchical form; a point on which the moſt enlightened men in all ages have entertained very different opinions. In a government like ours, conſiſting of three ſimple elements, as this variety of ſentiment may naturally be expected to take place, ſo if any predilection be felt toward one more than another, that partiality ſeems moſt commendable which inclines to the republican part. At moſt it is only the love of liberty to exceſs. The mixture of monarchy and nobility is chiefly of uſe as it gives regularity, order, and ſtability to popular freedom. Were we, however, without any proof, to admit that diſſenters are more tinctured with republican principles than others, it might be conſidered as the natural effect of the abſurd conduct of the legiſlature. Expoſed to pains and penalties, excluded

excluded from all offices of truſt, proſcribed by the ſpirit of the preſent reign, menaced and inſulted wherever they appear, they muſt be more than men if they felt no reſentment, or were paſſionately devoted to the ruling powers. To expect affection in return for injury, is to gather where they have not ſcattered, and reap where they have not ſown. The ſuperſtition of diſſenters is not ſo abject as to prompt them to worſhip the conſtitution through fear. Yet as they have not forgotten the benefits it imparted, and the protection it afforded till of late, they are too much its friends to flatter its defects, or defend its abuſes. Their only wiſh is to ſee it reformed, and reduced to its original principles.

In recent diſplays of loyalty they muſt acknowledge themſelves extremely defective. They have never plundered their neighbours to ſhew their attachment to the King; nor has their zeal for religion ever broke out into oaths and execrations. They have not proclaimed their reſpect for regular government by a breach of the laws; or attempted to maintain tranquillity by riots. Theſe beautiful ſpecimens of loyalty belong to the virtue and moderation of the high

church party alone, with whoſe character they perfectly correſpond.

In a ſcurrilous paper which has been lately circulated with malignant induſtry, the diſſenters at large, and Dr. Price in particular, are accuſed, with ſtrange effrontery, of having involved us in the American war; when it is well known they ever ſtood aloof from that ſcene of guilt and blood.

Had their remonſtrances been regarded, the calamities of that war had never been incurred; but what is of more conſequence in the eſtimation of anonymous ſcribblers, there would have remained one lie leſs to ſwell the catalogue of their falſehoods.

From the joy which diſſenters have expreſſed at the French revolution, it has been moſt abſurdly inferred, that they wiſh for a ſimilar event in England; without conſidering that ſuch a concluſion is a libel on the Britiſh conſtitution, as it muſt proceed on a ſuppoſition that our government is as deſpotic as the ancient monarchy of France. To imagine the feelings muſt be the ſame when the objects are ſo different, ſhews

a moſt

a moſt lamentable degree of malignity and folly.

Encompaſſed as diſſenters are by calumny and reproach, they have ſtill the ſatisfaction to reflect, that theſe have uſually been the lot of diſtinguiſhed virtue; and that in the corrupt ſtate of men's intereſts and paſſions, the unpopularity of a cauſe is rather a preſumption of its excellence.

They will be ſtill more happy if the frowns of the world ſhould be the means of reviving that ſpirit of evangelical piety which once diſtinguiſhed them ſo highly. Content if they can gain protection, without being ſo romantic as to aſpire to praiſe; they will continue firm, I doubt not, in thoſe principles which they have hitherto acted on, unſeduced by rewards, and unſhaken by dangers. From the paſſions of their enemies, they will appeal to the judgment of poſterity;—a more impartial tribunal. Above all, they will calmly await the deciſion of the Great Judge, before whom both they and their enemies muſt appear, and the ſprings and ſources of their mutual animoſity be laid open; when the clouds of miſrepreſentation being ſcat-

tered, it will be ſeen they are a virtuous and oppreſſed people, who are treading, though with unequal ſteps, in the path of thoſe illuſtrious prophets, apoſtles, and martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy. In the mean time they are far from envying the popularity and applauſe which may be acquired in a contrary courſe; eſteeming the reproaches of freedom above the ſplendours of ſervitude

SECTION VI.

On the Cauſes of the preſent Diſcontents.

WE have arrived, it is a melancholy truth which can no longer be concealed, we have at length arrived at that criſis when nothing but ſpeedy and effectual reform can ſave us from ruin. An amendment in the repreſentation is wanted, as well to ſecure the liberty we already poſſeſs,

poſſeſs, as to open the way for the removal of thoſe abuſes which pervade every branch of the adminiſtration. The accumulation of debt and taxes, to a degree unexampled in any other age or country, has ſo augmented the influence of the crown, as to deſtroy the equipoiſe and balance of the conſtitution. The original deſign of the funding ſyſtem which commenced in the reign of King William, was to give ſtability to the revolution, by engaging the monied intereſt to embark on its bottom. It immediately advanced the influence of the crown, which the Whigs then exalted as much as poſſible, as a countervail to the intereſt of the pretender.

The miſchief of this ſhort-ſighted policy cannot be better deſcribed than in the language of Bolingbroke. "Few men," ſays he, "at that "time looked forward enough to foreſee the "conſequences of the new conſtitution of the "revenue, that was ſoon afterwards formed; "nor of the method of the funding ſyſtem that "immediately took place: which, abſurd as "they are, have continued ſince, till it has be-"come ſcarce poſſible to alter them. Few peo-"ple, I ſay, foreſaw how the multiplication of

"taxes,

" taxes, and the creation of funds would increaſe
" yearly the power of the crown, and bring our
" liberties, by a natural and neceſſary progreſ-
" ſion, into a more real, though leſs apparent
" danger, than they were in before the revolu-
" tion; a due reflection on the experience of
" other ages and countries, would have point-
" ed out national corruption as the natural and
" neceſſary conſequence of inveſting the crown
" with the management of ſo vaſt a revenue;
" and alſo, the loſs of liberty as the natural and
" neceſſary conſequence of national corrup-
" tion *."

If there be any truth in theſe reflections, how much muſt our apprehenſions be heightened by the prodigious augmentation of revenue and debt, ſince the time of George the Firſt. What a harveſt has been reaped from the ſeeds of corruption then ſown!—The revenue is now upwards of ſeventeen millions, and though nine are employed to pay the intereſt of the national debt, this is ſmall conſolation, when we reflect that that debt is the remnant of waſteful, deſtruc-

* Letter ii. on the Study of Hiſtory.

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tive wars, and that till there is a change in the ſyſtem, we are continually liable to ſimilar calamities. The multiplied channels through which ſeventeen millions of money muſt flow into the treaſury, the legion of officers it creates, the patronage its expenditure on the ſeveral branches of the adminiſtration ſupplies, have rendered the influence of the crown nearly abſolute and deciſive. The controul of parliament ſinks under this preſſure into formality: the balance of the different orders becomes a mere theory, which ſerves to impoſe upon ignorance, and varniſh corruption. There is no power in the ſtate that can act as a ſufficient antagoniſt to the ſilent irreſiſtible force of royal patronage.

The influence of the crown, by means of its revenue, is more dangerous than prerogative, in proportion as corruption operates after a more concealed manner than force. A violent act of prerogative is ſenſibly felt, and creates an alarm; but it is the nature of corruption to lay apprehenſion aſleep, and to effect its purpoſes while the forms of liberty remain undiſturbed. The firſt employs force to enſlave the people: the ſecond employs the people to enſlave themſelves.

ſelves. The moſt determined enemy to freedom can wiſh for nothing more than the continuance of preſent abuſes. While the ſemblance of repreſentation can be maintained, while popular deluſion can be kept up, he will ſpare the *extremities* of liberty. He aims at a higher object, that of *ſtriking at the heart.*'

A fatal lethargy has long been ſpreading amongſt us, attended, as is natural, with a prevailing diſpoſition both in and out of parliament, to treat plans of reform with contempt. After the acceſſion, place and penſion bills were frequently paſſed by the commons, though rejected by the lords; nothing of that nature is now ever attempted. A ſtanding army in time of peace was a ſubject of frequent complaint, and is expreſsly provided againſt by the bill of rights: it is now become a part of the conſtitution; for though the nominal direction be placed in parliament, the mutiny bill paſſes as a matter of courſe, the forces are never diſbanded; the more completely to detach them from the community, barracks are erected; and martial law is eſtabliſhed in its utmoſt ſeverity. If freedom can ſurvive this expedient, copied

from the practice of foreign deſpots, it will be an inſtance of unexampled good fortune. Mr. Hume terms it a mortal diſtemper in the Britiſh conſtitution of which it muſt *inevitably* periſh.

To whatever cauſe it be owing, it is certain the meaſures of adminiſtration have, during the preſent reign, leaned ſtrongly towards arbitrary power. The deciſion on the Middleſex election was a blow aimed at the vitals of the conſtitution. Before the people had time to recover from their panic, they were plunged into the American war—a war of pride and ambition, and ending in humiliation and diſgrace. The ſpirit of the government is ſo well underſtood, that the moſt violent even of the clergy, are content to drop their animoſity, to turn their affections into a new channel, and to devote to the houſe of Hanover, the flattery and the zeal by which they ruined the race of Stuart. There cannot be a clearer ſymptom of the decay of liberty than the dread of ſpeculative opinions; which is at preſent carried to a length in this nation that can ſcarcely be exceeded. Engliſhmen were accuſtomed till of late, to make po-

litical ſpeculation the amuſement of leiſure, and the employment of genius;—they are now taught to fear it more than death. Under the torpid touch of deſpotiſm the patriotic ſpirit has ſhrunk into a narrow compaſs; confined to gaze with admiration on the proceedings of parliament, and liſten to the oracles of the miniſter with ſilent acquieſcence, and pious awe. Abuſes are ſacred, and the pool of corruption muſt putrify in peace. Perſons who a few years back were clamorous for reform, are making atonement for having been betrayed into any appearance of virtue, by a quick return to their natural character. Is not the kingdom peopled with ſpies and informers?—Are not inquiſitorial tribunals erected in every corner of the land? A ſtranger who beholding a whole nation filled with alarm, ſhould enquire the cauſe of the commotion, would be a little ſurpriſed on being informed, that inſtead of any appearance of inſurrections or plots, a pamphlet only had been publiſhed. In a government upheld by ſo immenſe a revenue, and boaſting a conſtitution declared to be the envy of the world, this abject

diſtruſt of its own power, is more than a million lectures on corruptions and abuſes. The wiſdom of ages, the maſter-piece of human policy, complete in all its parts, and that needs no reformation, can hardly ſupport itſelf againſt a ſixpenny pamphlet, devoid of truth or ability! To require ſycophants to bluſh, is exacting too great a departure from the decorum of their character; but common ſenſe might be expected to remain, after ſhame is extinguiſhed.

Whoever ſeriouſly contemplates the preſent infatuation of the people, and the character of their leaders, will be tempted to predict the ſpeedy downfall of liberty. They cheriſh to exceſs the forms, while they repreſs the ſpirit of the conſtitution: they perſecute freedom and adorn its ſepulchre. When corruption has ſtruck its roots ſo deep, it may be doubted whether even the liberty of the preſs be not of more detriment than advantage. The prints which are the common ſources of information, are replete with falſehood; virtue is calumniated; and hardly any characters ſafe from their blaſt, but thoſe whom infamy cannot ſink lower. The greater part, no doubt, are in the pay of

miniſtry, or their adherents. Thus deluſion ſpreads, and the people are inſtructed to confound anarchy with reform, their friends with their oppreſſors.

Who can hear without indignant contempt, the miniſters annual eulogium on the Engliſh conſtitution. Is the parliament ſo ignorant then that it needs to go to ſchool every ſeſſion to learn thoſe elements of political knowledge which every Briton underſtands? Or is the nature of the Britiſh conſtitution a ſecret in the breaſt of the miniſtry to be opened with the budget. Indiſputible excellence wants no encomium; but this flattery is intended to bury in an admiration of its merit, all remembrance of its defects. Whatever remains of beauty or vigour it poſſeſſes, are held in no eſtimatoin but as they produce an acquieſcence in abuſes, It is its imperfections only miniſters admire; its corruptions that ſolace them. The topics of their encomium are as abſurd as the purpoſe is infamous. The flouriſhing ſtate of trade and manufactures is diſplayed in proof of the unequalled excellence of the Britiſh conſtitution, without reflecting that a temporary decay will

ſupport

ſupport with equal force an oppoſite concluſion. For if we owe preſent proſperity to the nature of the government, recent calamities muſt be traced to the ſame ſource, and that conſtitution which is now affirmed to be the beſt, muſt be allowed during the American war to have been the worſt. That there is a connection between commercial proſperity and the nature of a governmnt muſt be admitted; but its operation is gradual and ſlow, not felt from year to year, but to be traced by the compariſon of one age and country with another. But allowing that our wealth may increaſe along with the increaſe of abuſes, the nation we hope is not ſo fordid as to look upon wealth as the ſupreme good; however well that idea may correſpond with the views of a miniſtry, who ſeem determined to leave us no other. Freedom, as it animates induſtry by ſecuring its rewards, opens a path to wealth; but if that wealth be ſuffered to debaſe a people, and render them venal and dependant, it will ſilently conduct them back again to miſery and depreſſion. Rome was never more opulent than on the eve of departing

liberty.

liberty. Her vaſt wealth was a ſediment that remained on the turning of the tide.

It is ſingular enough, but I hope not ominous, that the flattery beſtowed by the poets of antiquity on the ruling powers, reſembles in every thing but its elegance, the adulation of modern ſycophants. The extent of empire, the improvement of arts, the diffuſion of opulence and ſplendour, are the topics with which Horace adorned the praiſes of Auguſtus: but the penetration of Tacitus developes amidſt theſe flattering appearances, the ſeeds of ruin. The florid bloom but ill concealed that fatal malady which preyed upon the vitals.

Between the period of national honour and complete degeneracy, there is uſually an interval of national vanity, during which examples of virtue are recounted and admired without being imitated. The Romans were never more proud of their anceſtors than when they ceaſed to reſemble them. From being the freeſt and moſt high-ſpirited people in the world, they ſuddenly fell into the tameſt and moſt abject ſubmiſſion. Let not the name of Britons, my countrymen, too much elate you; nor ever think

think yourſelves ſafe while you abate one jot of that holy jealouſy by which your liberties have been hitherto ſecured. The richer the inheritance bequeathed you, the more it merits your care for its preſervation. The poſſeſſion muſt be continued by the ſpirit with which it was acquired at firſt; and as it was gained by vigilance, it will be loſt by ſupineneſs. A degenerate race repoſe on the merit of their forefathers; the virtuous create a fund of their own. The former look back upon their anceſtors to hide their ſhame; the latter look forward to poſterity to levy a tribute of admiration. In vain will you confide in the *forms* of a free conſtitution. Unleſs you reanimate thoſe forms with freſh vigour, they will be melancholy memorials of what you once were, and haunt you with the ſhade of departed liberty. A ſilent ſtream of corruption poured over the whole land, has tainted every branch of the adminiſtration with decay. On your temperate, but manly exertions depend the happineſs and freedom of the lateſt poſterity. That Aſſembly which ſits by right of repreſenſation, will be little inclined to oppoſe your will, expreſſed in a firm, deciſive manner. You may

be

be deafened by clamour, miſled by ſophiſtry, or weakened by diviſion, but you cannot be deſpiſed with impunity. A vindictive miniſtry may hang the terrors of criminal proſecution over the heads of a few with ſucceſs; but at their peril will they attempt to intimidate a nation. The trick of aſſociations, of pretended plots, and ſilent inſurrections, will oppoſe a feeble barrier to the impreſſion of the popular mind.

The theory of the conſtitution in the moſt important particulars is a ſatire on the practice. The theory provides the reſponſibility of miniſters as a check to the execution of ill deſigns: but in reality we behold the baſeſt of the tribe retreat from the ruin of their country, loaded with honours and with ſpoils. Theory tells us the parliament is free and independent; experience will correct the miſtake by ſhewing its ſubſervience to the crown. We learn from the firſt, the legiſlature is choſen by the unbiaſſed voice of all who can be ſuppoſed to have a will of their own; we learn from the laſt, the pretended electors are but a handful of the people, who are never leſs at their own diſpoſal than in the buſineſs of election. The theory holds out equal

equal benefits to all, and equal liberty, without any other diſcrimination, than that of a good and bad ſubject: its practice brands with proſcription and diſgrace a numerous claſs of inhabitants on account of their religion. In theory the ſeveral orders of the ſtate are a check on each other; but corruption has oiled the wheels of that machinery, harmonized its motions, and enabled it to bear with united preſſure on the happineſs of the people.

The principal remedy for the diſeaſes of the ſtate is undoubtedly a reform in parliament; from which, as a central point, inferiour improvements may iſſue; but as I have already treated on that ſubject at large, I ſhall not inſiſt on it here. I cannot cloſe this pamphlet, however, without adverting for a moment, to a few of the principal objects which well merit the attention of the legiſlature.

On abuſes in the church, it is to little purpoſe to expatiate, as they are too numerous to be detailed, and too inveterate to be corrected. Unleſs it be a maxim that honeſty will endanger her exiſtence, her creeds ought in all reaſon to correſpond with the ſentiments of her mem-

bers. The world, it is to be feared, will be little edified by the example of a church, which in compelling its miniſters to ſubſcribe opinions that few of them believe, is a diſcipline of fraud. Nor is the collection of tithes calculated to ſoften the odium. As a mode of union with the pariſhioners, they are fruitful of contention; as a reſtraint on the improvement of land, impolitic and oppreſſive; as a remnant of the jewiſh law, ſuperſtitious and abſurd. True magnanimity would inſtruct the clergy to recede from a claim which they will probably be compelled ſhortly to relinquiſh. But no reform, it ſeems, muſt take place in the church any more than in the ſtate, that its corruptions may keep pace with the progreſs of its ally.

The condition of the poor in this country calls for compaſſion and redreſs. Many of them, through the want of mental improvement, are ſunk almoſt beneath the level of humanity; and their hard-earned pittance is ſo diminiſhed by taxes, that it is with the utmoſt difficulty they can nouriſh their children, and utterly impoſſible to afford them education. The poor laws enacted for their relief, by confining their

their induſtry to a particular ſpot, and denying a privilege, common to the beaſts of the foreſt, of chuſing the place they ſhall ſtarve in, are an accumulated oppreſſion. Were induſtry allowed to find its level, were the poor laws aboliſhed, and a ſmall proportion of that expence which ſwells the tide of corruption, the ſplendours of the great, and the miſeries of war, beſtowed on the inſtruction of the common people, the happy effects would deſcend to the remoteſt poſterity, and open a proſpect which humanity might delight to anticipate. In England we have been adding wheel to wheel, and ſpring to ſpring, till we have rendered the machine ofgovernment far too complicated; forgetting in the midſt of wars, negotiations and factious diſputes, that the true end of civil polity is the happineſs of the people. We have liſtened to every breeze that moves along the ſurface of Europe, and deſcried danger from afar; while deaf to the complaints of the poor, we have beheld ignorance, wretchedneſs, and barbarity multiply at home, without the ſmalleſt regard. Is it poſſible to behold with patience the numberleſs tribe of placeman, penſioners,

and ſycophantsr who are enriched at the public expence; a noxious ſpawn engendered by the corruptions of government, and nouriſhed by the diſeaſes. Were our immenſe revenue conducive to the maintenance of royal dignity, or proportioned to the exigencies of the ſtate, it would be borne with pleaſure; but at preſent, it bids fair to be the purchaſe of our ſervitude.

Our laws in order to become a proper rule of civil life, much want reviſion and amendment. They are moreover never promulgated. For this omiſſion Judge Blackſtone aſſigns a very curious reaſon: "That being enacted "by our repreſentatives, every man is ſuppoſ- "ed in the eye of the law, to be preſent in the "legiſlature." It would be an improvement on this delegated knowledge of the law, if the penalty were alſo delegated; and criminals puniſhed by repreſentation. The laws in their preſent ſtate, are ſo piled into volumes, encumbered with precedents, and perplexed with intricacies, that they are often rather a ſnare than a guide, and are a fruitful ſource of the injuſtice they are intended to prevent. The expence is as formidable as the penalty; nor is it to any

purpoſe to ſay they are the ſame to the poor as to the rich, while by their delay, expence, and perplexity they are placed on an eminence, which opulence only can aſcend. The commendation beſtowed by foreigners ſo liberally on Engliſh juriſprudence was never extended to our municipal code; which is confuſed, perplexed, and ſanguinary in the extreme; but to the trial by jury, and the dignified impartiality which marks the conduct of judges. For want of gradual improvements to enable it to keep pace with the progreſs of ſociety, the moſt uſeful operations of law are clouded by fictions*.

Theſe are a few only of the maladies which indicate a bad habit of the political body: nor can a true eſtimate be made of our ſituation ſo much by adverting to *particular evils*, as by an attention to the general aſpect of affairs. The preſent criſis, in my apprehenſion, is the fulleſt of terror and of danger, we have ever experienced. In the extenſion of exciſe laws, in the erection of barracks, in the determined ad-

* See an excellent publication on this ſubject entitled Juridical Eſſays, by Mr. Randall.

herence

herence to abuſes, diſplayed by parliament, in the deſertion of pretended patriots, the ſpread of arbitrary principles, the tame ſubdued ſpirit of the nation, we behold the ſeeds of political ruin quickening into life. The *ſecurities* of liberty, as was long ſince remarked by Dr. Price, have given way; and what remains is little more than an *indulgence* which cannot continue long when it ceaſes to be cheriſhed in the affections of the people. The little of public virtue that ſtill ſubſiſts, is no match for diſciplined armies of corruption. The people are periſhing for lack of knowledge. Diſquieted by imaginary alarms, inſenſible to real danger that awaits them, they are taught to court that ſervitude, which will be a ſource of miſery to themſelves, and to poſterity.

Deplorable as the proſpect is, a precarious hope may be founded, perhaps, on the magnitude of abuſes. There is, it has often been remarked, an ultimate point both of elevation, and depreſſion in the affairs of Kingdoms, to which when they arrive they begin to turn of their own accord, and to fall back into their ancient channels.

channels. We are certainly entitled to all the comfort that conſideration is capable of affording. Taxation can hardly be more oppreſſive, repreſentation more venal and inadequate, the influence of the people more extinguiſhed, or falſehood and deception more triumphant than they are at preſent.

There is alſo another circumſtance attending the preſent criſis, which if we are wiſe enough to improve it, may be of the utmoſt advantage. Of the numberleſs political parties which have hitherto diſtracted our attention, and divided our attachment, there now remain but two; the patrons of corruption, and the friends of liberty; they who are waiting for the diſorders of government to ripen into arbitrary power; and they who are anxious to bring back the conſtitution to its original principles. The colours by which they are diſtinguiſhed are too bold and ſtrong to be ever confounded, or if there could be any poſſible embarraſſment in the choice, the miniſtry have condeſcended to remove that obſcurity, by purſuing an intereſt not only diſtinct from, but directly oppoſed to, that of the people. The clamour of Whigs and

Tories

Tories hath happily ſubſided; and pretended patriots are at length ſo kind as to unmaſk before the people, and ſtand forth in their native character, the objects of juſt deteſtation. We cannot wiſh for better leſſons of public virtue than is furniſhed by the contraſt of their vices.

On the preſent war, until the views of the miniſtry are more unfolded, it behoves me to ſpeak with tenderneſs and reſerve. If nothing more be intended than the maintenance of national honour, and the faith of treaties, it will merit the warmeſt ſupport of every well wiſher to his country. But if the re-eſtabliſhment of the ancient government of France be any part of the object; if it be a war with freedom, a confederacy of Kings againſt the rights of man; it will be the laſt humiliation and diſgrace that can be inflicted on Great Britain; and were there any truth in tales of incantation, to behold us engaged in ſuch a cauſe, were enough to diſturb the repoſe of our anceſtors, and move the aſhes of the dead! The ſteps preparatory to the war, the inflamed paſſions, and the character of our allies, afford an ill omen of the temper with which it will be conducted.

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The pretence reſpecting the Netherlands certainly entitles the miniſtry to the praiſe of conſiſtence. It is quite of a piece with the candour and ſincerity which affirmed the balance of Europe to be deſtroyed by the ſiezure of Oczakow, but denied it was endangered by the conqueſt of Poland, and the invaſion of France.

The French revolution we cannot but remember was from the firſt an object of jealouſy to miniſters. There needed not the late unhappy exceſſes, the maſſacres of September, and the execution of Louis, to excite or diſplay their hoſtility. It appeared in the inſult and deriſion of their retainers from the higheſt to the loweſt. If they meant fairly to the intereſts of general liberty, why that uneaſineſs at the fall of deſpotiſm in a neighbouring country? Why render parliament a theatre of abuſe on a revolution whoſe commencement was diſtinguiſhed by unexampled mildneſs and tranquillity? But this part of their conduct was likewiſe conſiſtent. Intent on the deſtruction of liberty in one country, they were diſconcerted at ſeeing it revive in another. Before they ventured to

extinguiſh the dying taper, they waited for the ſurrounding ſcene to be ſhut up in darkneſs. I am perfectly aware that to ſpeak in terms of decency and reſpect of the French revolution, is to incur in the prevailing diſpoſition of the times the laſt of infamies. If we dare to rejoice at the emancipation of a great people from thraldom, it muſt be at the peril of the fouleſt imputations that imagination can invent, or malignity apply. In contempt, however, of theſe calumnies, I am free to confeſs, the French revolution has always appeared to me, and does ſtill appear, the moſt ſplendid event recorded in the annals of hiſtory. The friends of liberty contemplate the crimes and diſorders with which it has been ſtained* with the deepeſt regret; but they ſtill hope they will in the reſult be

* The execution of the King was certainly a moſt cruel and unjuſtifiable tranſaction, alike repugnant to law, order, and humanity. Without being conducive to any views of policy whatever, it ſeems to have been merely a gratification of the moſt deteſtable paſſions. The treatment of the beautiful and unfortunate Queen and of the royal family is barbarous and unmanly in the extreme. When we look at their ſufferings humanity weeps, and pity forgets their crimes.

more than compenſated, by the grandeur of its principles, and the beneficence of its effects. Inſtead of wiſhing for a ſimilar event in England, they are intent on reform chiefly to avoid that neceſſity. Under every *form* of government, they know how to recognize the divine aſpect of freedom, and without it can be ſatisfied with none. The evils of anarchy and of deſpotiſm are two extremes which they equally dread; and between which no middle path can be found, but that of effectual reform. To avert the calamities that await us on either ſide, the ſtreams of corruption muſt be drained off, the independence of parliament reſtored, the ambition of ariſtocracy repreſſed, and the majeſty of the people lift itſelf up. It is poſſible to retreat from the brink of a precipice, but woe to that nation which ſleep upon it!

FINIS.

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